DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 008 IR 020 078

AUTHOR	Fuchs, Merrill Lee; Gaffney, Maureen
TITLE	Using Folktale Films.
PUB DATE	82
NOTE	41p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Media Center for Children, Inc., 3 West 29th Street, New York, NY 10001 (write for price; quantity discounts available).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT	Young Viewers Magazine; v5 n1-2 Win-Spr 1982
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Animals; Annotated Bibliographies; Characterization; Elementary Secondary Education; *Fables; *Fantasy; Filmographies; *Films; *Folk Culture; Learning Activities; Literary Devices; Models; Resource Materials; Stereotypes; Symbols (Literary); Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	Film Reviews; *Frog Prince or Faithful Henry; Media Appraisal; *Media Education; PF Project

ABSTRACT

A model user's guide for the film, "The Frog King or Faithful Henry," introduces media specialists and educators to the range of possibilities for developing different activities for different objectives and age levels from a single film. An introductory article provides a synopsis of the film, rationale for its choice as a model, a discussion of folklore, and suggestions for using the guide. The bulk of the issue is divided into users' guides for the following grade levels: kindergarten to 4th grade, 5th to 8th grade, and 9th to 12th grade. These guides include activities and discussion questions on the movie and related topics, such as fantasy and reality, animal symbols, characters and conflicts, folklore, realism and illusion, attitudes towards animals, and stereotypes. Six annotated bibliographies cover filmmaking and film use, animals, animals in art, bestiaries, folktales and folklore, history resources, poetry, and related films. The issue concludes with a review supplement of nine films that are either folktale films or that have a thematic relation to "The Frog King." (LP)

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young viewers

Winter/Spring 1982

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using folktale films

young viewers

Winter/Spring 1982 (Vol 5, Nos 1 & 2)

contents

"THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY" - A Model Guide to the Film (Introduction) Page 3
Kindergarten to Fourth Grade Level User's Guide 6
Fifth to Eighth Grade Level User's Guide 9
Ninth to Twelfth Grade Level User's Guide 14
Filmmaking and Film Use (Bibliography) 19
Animals, Animals in Art, Bestiaries (Bibliography) 20
Folktales and Folklore Resources (Bibliography) 21
History Resources (Bibliography) 22
Poetry (Bibliography) 22
Filmography (Films with Related Themes or Subjects) 23
Film Review Supplement 24

This entire issue of Young Viewers is a model user's guide for the film, THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY. Even the Film Review Supplement which includes nine films is tied in to the guide -- either through themes related to THE FROG KING... or through aspects of folklore. We decided to publish this model as a demonstration of the range of possibilities for developing activities for different objectives and different age levels from a single film. We chose Tom Davenport's film as our "guinea pig" because it has a richness for use that few films offer. Typically, his folktale films inspire lively discussions and lead to interesting follow-ups with young people. THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY was no exception to this rule.

Not unimportantly, we also chose to develop a guide for this particular film because we were funded to do so. Initially, we received some monies from the Youth Project of the National Endowment for the Humanities, indirectly through a grant to Tom Davenport. Since it will be an appendix in our forthcoming book, On the Nature of Media for Children, work on the guide was also supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts, both of which funded the book.

The guide was developed primarily by Merrill Lee Fuchs, MCC's Research Director, and Maureen Gaffney, MCC's Executive Director. Much help was provided by MCC staff: Kiersta Fricke, Bernadette Mineo, and Kathy Winings, Film Evaluation Interns; Molly Hankwitz, Assistant Editor; and Patrick McDermott, Editorial Intern through the Urban Corps Artists' Apprenticeship Program. Special assistance in preparing parts of the guide was provided by outside consultants: Marilyn Berg Iarusso, Storytelling Specialist for the New York Public Library System; Joanna Uhry, Elementary Teacher in Social Studies and Remedial Reading at the Calhoun Learning Center in Manhattan; and Margaret Coughlan, Acting Chief of Children's Literature for the Library of Congress.

In addition, we received cooperation in field testing from the following teachers, coordinators, or principals: Susan Bishop and Sarah Pappenheimer, Barnard School; Marsha Weiner, Christ Church Day School; Bernadette Mineo, Elmhurst Hospital; Jeri Liebman and Richard Greene, Grady School; Joe Gandolfo, J.H.S. 143; Jeff Levitsky, Edward R. Murrow High School; Carol Dworman and Ruth Lacey, P.S. 75; and Samuel Cooper, P.S. 124.

MCC staff screened the film, THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, numerous times to analyze its structure, characterizations, and themes. After that, the film was field tested twenty-three times, including fifteen elementary level screenings and eight high school screenings.

Once the film had been screened with young viewers, MCC staff began showing it to adults, principally to librarians, museum and arts educators, and classroom teachers. So far, there have been ten adult screenings. In developing the guide, responses of children, adolescents, and adults have been taken into account, along with curriculum areas, developmental levels, and the themes and content of the film itself.

Not surprisingly, the issues raised by adults differ widely from those raised by children. Certain elements in THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY elicited comments, and sometimes criticism, from adults -- most notably that the king did not seem sufficiently "royal"; that the frog was not transformed by a kiss; that the film was a live-action work; and that Black people were cast as servants. The first two aspects are discussed in the introduction; the latter two are under imprinting, artistic choices, or historical accuracy in several sections of the guide. From past experience with other folktale films, we know that adults can also be concerned with the image of women in these traditional tales. Thus, we addressed the issue of stereotypes in the introduction as well as in the high school section of the guide.

Children's responses to THE FROG KING... were much more film-specific. Generally, younger children were concerned with the moral issues of making then breaking a promise; middle-aged children were not sure the frog's request was fair; and both young and middle-aged groups were concerned with aspects of the parent-child conflict.

Young adults' responses depended on several factors, ranging from their familiarity with folklore to their ability to discuss feelings openly with each other. Although "fairytales" are not necessarily well-received by this age viewer, THE FROG KING... worked with them in our field testing. We would not recommend, however, trying to discuss this film with adolescents unless you have already established an ongoing relationship with them.

"the frog king or faithful henry" a model guide to the film

by merrill lee fuchs and maureen gaffney

THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY
15 minutes color/liveaction USA/1980
Directed by Tom Davenport.
Distributed by Davenport Films, Delaplane VA 22025

This Americanized version of the Grimm folktale is set in rural Virginia around the turn of the century.

The first of the film's four scenes occurs in a verdant wood (shot, initially, from above). As the narrator begins, "In olden days, when wishing still helped...," in the distance we see a dark-haired girl in a white dress skipping through the trees. She comes to the base of a large tree and plays with her favorite toy, a golden ball. Before long, the adolescent girl drops her ball accidentally into a well at the base of the tree. She tries unsuccessfully to retrieve it, then bursts into tears. A compassionate frog offers to help if, in return, she will be his friend. "I want to sit at your table, eat from your plate, drink from your cup, and sleep in your bed," says the frog. The girl agrees, but once the frog has retrieved her golden ball, she runs off. The frog cries plaintively, "Wait for me."

The second scene takes place in an elegant dining hall where the girl, dressed in a golden taffeta gown, is having a formal meal with her father, two sisters, and some friends. A small chamber group is playing music and Black servants are waiting on the dinner guests. Suddenly, there is a loud knock. The girl goes to the door and discovers the frog who asks that she keep her promise. She slams the door and returns to the table where -- after learning what happened at the well -- her father says she must keep her word. He instructs her to allow the frog to enter. Slowly, the creature hops across the vast expanse of the hall and slips under the table. A dignified butler prepares a chair next to the girl and gently puts the frog there. Unhappily for the girl, he hops all over the table and spots her dress. Despite this, her father says she must take the frog up to her room, just as she promised.

The third scene takes place in the girl's bedroom. She enters, puts the frog on her dresser, gets ready for bed, and climbs under the covers. The frog leaps off the dresser and hops awkwardly across the wooden floor toward the bed. Midway, he asks to be taken into bed. When the girl does not comply, the frog threatens to tell her father. In a fit of rage, she leaps out of bed, grabs the frog and throws him against a doorway. Suddenly, a handsome young man in white tie and tails appears where the frog would have landed. The narrator explains that he is a king's son who was bewitched. Surprised, the girl runs to help him and they talk as the scene ends.

The fourth scene takes place on a rural dirt road. During the first part of this scene, the camera (shot from the driver's seat) follows behind a team of horses pulling a carriage which is apparently (since viewers do not see them) taking the "princess" and her new husband to his kingdom to live. As the carriage proceeds down the road, the narrator says that the young king heard a loud noise -- the breaking of iron bands around the heart of his servant, Faithful Henry. (At this point, viewers cannot see him, either.) The narrator explains that in order to keep his heart from breaking when the young king was bewitched, Henry had placed bands around his own heart. Now that his master is restored, Henry's heart expands with joy and snaps the bands. The narrator finishes, and the camera, no longer on the carriage, remains on the road and "watches" as the vehicle pulls away. Only then, do viewers see Faithful Henry, riding on the back of the carriage.

Both illustrations on this page are by Walter Crane for "The Frog Prince" which appeared in Lucy Crane's translation of the Grimms' Household Stories (Dover, 1963).

A major goal of this guide is to help children understand and see connections between aspects of history and culture through the process of relating Tom Davenport's 16mm film, THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, to folklore, customs, and animal symbolism in art and literature. Another goal is to illustrate how variously a good film can be used.

Folktales or Fairytales

We feel it is important to clarify the difference between the terms folktale and fairytale. In "Folktales and Legends in Children's Films," Marilyn Iarusso, a storytelling specialist for the New York Public Library system, explains that the terms are not interchangeable -- despite the fact that many people use them incorrectly as equivalents. "Fairytale is a particularly imprecise term," Iarusso says, "in that it may... refer to a story from the oral traditions such as a tale collected by the Brothers Grimm, a classic literary creation such as a story by Hans Christian Andersen or Oscar Wilde, or a modern tale of magic like Margery Bianco's The Velveteen Rabbit." In contrast, Iarusso explains, the folktale is "...a told story, the product of a particular culture, stripped down to essentials by generations of storytellers."

The distinction between the terms is further muddled by the fact that some fairytales derive from folk sources. In this guide, therefore, we are using the term folktale for those works (such as the Grimm tales and direct translations from Grimm) which derive from the oral tradition of a folk culture. We are using the term fairytale to describe works that originated as film or written fantasy-entertainments for children -- or as in the tales from socialist countries, as fantasy stories designed to edify.

Imprinting

Many adults and children have difficulty with film adaptations of literature if the film differs in any respect from the version they know. Often this difficulty is expressed as a criticism of the film; unfortunately, this can interfere with a genuine experience of the film on its own terms. To help mitigate such responses, we have found it helpful to discuss the idea of imprinting with adults and children over ten. Imprints are the individual details each storyteller gives to a tale when s/he tells it.

Aside from the changes individual storytellers make in each tale, something akin to imprinting occurs regionally and nationally. In the Southern Appalachia, where filmmaker Davenport lives, there exists a strong tradition of Americanizing European (or African) folktales. In tales from Appalachia, such as the well-known "Jack Tales," kings smoke corncob pipes and sit in rocking chairs on porches -- as did the people who told and heard the tales.

A Particularly American "Flavor"

In the first half of this century, American folklorist Richard Chase compiled a book of Southern Appalachian folktales for children called The Jack Tales. In his introduction, Chase apologizes for the rigidity the tales take in print. As he carefully explains, no storyteller ever told a tale exactly the same twice over, and no two storytellers ever told the same tale exactly alike.

It is worth noting that in The Jack Tales there is nothing fantastic or superhuman about the hero, Jack. As Herbert Halpert points out in the book's appendix, Jack is a far cry from the typical prince of European folk or fairytales. He is, rather, an ordinary boy who achieves success either by wits or sheer luck. [In some respects, Jack is a trickster hero. Interesting parallels can be drawn between the Appalachian Jack and benign aspects of other trickster heroes: Anansi the Spider, a figure in West African/West Indian folklore -- see Harden-Umolu under Folktales in the bibliography; Br'er Rabbit, a figure in Afro-American folklore -- see Faulkner; and Coyote, a figure in Native American/Southwestern folklore -- see Thompson.]

Even the king in The Jack Tales is unlike his European counterpart; he is as Appalachian and democratic as Jack. In the book's first tale, "Jack in the Giant's New Ground," an impoverished Jack decides to leave his parents' house to try his luck elsewhere. After travelling for some time, Jack spies a large stone house. The house has a gate of gold, so Jack figures rich folks must live there -- folks who might need a hired hand. When Jack shouts hello, a man comes to the door and says:

> "Hello, stranger. What'll ye have?"
> "I'm a lookin' for a job of work."
> "Don't know as I need to hire anybody right now. What's your name?"
> "Name's Jack."
> "Come on up, Jack, and sit a spell."
> .....The man reached in the door and pulled out a couple of chairs. Jack took one and they leaned back, commenced smokin'. Directly Jack says to that man, "What did you say your name was, mister?"
> "Why, Jack, I'm the king."

Learning how earlier American storytellers localized the tales that came with them from Europe and Africa will help viewers better understand why Davenport is following a well-established precedent in setting his tale on a Virginia estate instead of in a Rhineland castle. Like his Appalachian counterparts, he has created a uniquely American version of "The Frog King." Davenport's princess is a "spoiled little rich girl" and his king is a successful (i.e., wealthy) capitalist from the turn-of-the-century.

Three British Versions

In Katherine Brigg's comprehensive work, Dictionary of British Folktales, there are five versions of "The Frog King" tale. We have summarized three of them below. As these notations make clear, while each tale involves a girl, a well, a frog, an agreement, and the frog's transformation, the girl's behavior and the means by which the frog is transformed vary in each version.

In "The Frog Prince," a farm girl is sent by her mother to a well. She draws up a bucket containing a frog who promises that in return for getting him out of the well she will become a lady. The frog arrives at her house that night. Although initially uncivil, the girl brings the frog to bed when her father insists she do so. By morning, the frog has been transformed into a handsome prince.

In "The Frog Sweetheart," a king's youngest daughter is sent to fetch clear water for her ailing father. To her distress, she finds the well is muddy. A frog offers to bring her clear water if she will become his sweetheart. The princess agrees and, after taking the clear water, her father is cured. For three nights the frog comes to her chamber where he sleeps at the foot of her bed. Awakening on the third night to find the frog near her face, the princess throws it to the floor and the frog is transformed into a handsome prince.

In "The Well at the World's End," a girl is sent by her cruel stepmother to fetch water with a sieve. At the well, she realizes the hopelessness of her task and begins to cry. A frog suggests she plug the sieve with moss, so she does. That night the frog goes to the girl's house and asks to sup and sleep with her to which she agrees; but only after she complies with the frog's request to chop off his head is he transformed into a handsome prince.

The Grimm Version of "The Frog King"

In many picture storybook adaptations or in versions which have been edited for the juvenile market, the climax in "The Frog King" occurs when the princess kisses the frog. Apparently, this polite behavior was considered more acceptable than her behavior in the original Grimm tale wherein the princess throws the frog against a wall. In his film, Davenport returns to the original Grimm -- thus, the princess does not kiss the frog. Davenport has, in fact, kept the entire Grimm version in tact -- including the enigmatic appendage about Faithful Henry, a character who is introduced only after the main action has climaxed; see Colum or Segal under Folktales in the bibliography.

A Suggested Approach to Discussions

In our experience, helping viewers -- be they children, adolescents, or adult professionals -- connect with their

own feelings is an essential first step to having a meaningful discussion about any film. As brain research and psychotherapy verify, much information is connected to feelings -- once the feeling is brought to light, information connected with it can be explored. To ignore feelings, particularly in using film, a medium that is especially evocative of feelings, is to ignore an excellent base for discussions.

In our field testing prior to developing this guide, certain feelings came up regularly in response to THE FROG KING... The same responses, however, did not come up with all groups, even those within a given age breakdown. Thus, we could not find "a universal set of questions" that related specifically to young viewers' feelings. Instead, following a model developed by Richard Lacey (see Filmmaking in the bibliography), we have proposed question/exercises which help viewers get in touch with and articulate their own affective responses to the film.

Not only do open-ended questions work better to get at the heart of the matter, but specific questions could easily distort the process. Children might play what Lacey calls "the old school game" of giving adults what they seem to want -- exactly that and nothing more! Thus, unless your objective in using the film is to prove a particular point, we strongly suggest using the open-ended questions developed under General Questions about the Film which begin each section. They open up a sharing and exploration of the film which leads, quite smoothly, to exploration of other areas.

Using the Guide

In suggesting different ways to use THE FROG KING... in libraries, museums, schools, and hospitals, we have divided the guide into three grade level groupings: Kindergarten to Fourth Grade, Fifth to Eighth Grade, and Ninth to Twelfth Grade. While each breakdown explores similar topics, the concepts and approaches within each have been varied so as to be developmentally appropriate. Moreover, the organization of topics within each section is based, in large part, on our field testing. Topics following the general questions are ordered so as to reflect what was in our experience, the priorities of each age group. While we hope this ordering will be of some use, we do not mean to suggest that it is the only possible ordering of topics.

Within each section, we generally tried to indicate the type of approach, as well as the topics, that we found to be most appropriate for each group. Naturally, we could not include every potential question or activity. Thus, material which appears in one section might work just as well in another. Questions/activities from the first section could be adapted for pre-schoolers, with whom we successfully screened the film; and techniques such as the image/feeling skim or notation which appear in the high school section would also work with adults.

Because the guide was intended for a wide range of film users, it is quite detailed. No doubt, it has more suggestions than any one user is likely to employ -- either with one group or with this particular film. In its current form, however, this "model" illustrates a methodology for developing questions and follow-up activities for this and other films in a way that no simple listing of discussion topics could accomplish.

By going into depth, we were also better able to meet our own goals for this guide. We were able to elaborate on the connections possible between different art forms -- from film, literature, and fine arts to participatory arts activities -- and between film content and aspects of both culture and natural history. If sections thus seem overly complex, it is our hope that readers will take what they can use from the guide, altering it to meet their objectives. [Note: Young viewers' responses are discussed in the review of THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY which is in the Film Review Supplement, as well as in the introduction to each section. For those who would like general information about children's responses to works of art, The Child's Concept of Story: Ages Two to Seventeen (University of Chicago Press, 1978) is a wonderful resource. This book, by Arthur Applebee, integrates Piaget's theories of cognitive development with original research. It provides a helpful framework for understanding young people's responses to literature and other art forms -- a framework we have found invaluable in our work with film.]

the image of women

Many people are concerned about the image of women in folk and fairytales. In Davenport's THE FROG KING..., the princess -- rather than being docile, obedient, and cheerful in the face of a disturbing situation -- tends to be outspoken, self-centered, and temperamental. While not necessarily the most positive attributes, these are more reflective of a unique character than that of the typical, stereotyped fairytale princess.

This contrast can be a lead-in to discussions of sex-roles in folklore -- even with very young children. The princess could be compared to Snow White, Cinderella, or Sleeping Beauty. She could also be compared to other assertive, non-stereotypic females such as the Japanese women in "Three Strong Women," the princess in the Grimm tale "Many Fur," or Gretel in HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION (see Filmography). For a well-balanced look at sex-roles in literature, see Butler under Folktales in the bibliography; for tales with non-stereotypic female characters, see Lurie, Minard, and Stone also under Folktales.

animals as symbols

Humans have used animals as symbols for ages. As far back as the origin of the Jatakas (Indian-Buddhist tales, including many animal fables, which comprise the oldest known collection in the world), the lion has been symbolized as king of beasts. It is the Buddhist symbol of courage, nobility and constancy, and plays a prominent part in Chinese New Year rituals. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the lion symbolizes the tribe of Judah (Genesis: 49,9) and in the New Testament (Revelation: 5,5) it symbolizes Christ Jesus. In Africa, however, where the lion is indigenous, it has not been "...mythologized to attribute or symbol" (Leach).

Unlike the lion, the frog was not highly esteemed in the Bible. Frogs were one of the plagues visited upon Egypt (Exodus: 8,7) and one of the plagues which will accompany the Apocalypse -- "...fiends in the shape of frogs will visit the earth" (Revelation: 16,13). In contrast, the Aztec Chalchihuitlicue and the Egyptian Heqet are birth goddesses in the form of frogs.

Because it is held in such low regard in Western culture, the frog makes an unlikely mate for a princess. However, when the story involves transformation, perhaps the frog is symbolically a most appropriate animal. For books about animal symbolism, see Armstrong, Clark, Donaldson, Evans and Rybot under Animals, and Leach under Folktales in the bibliography. For information about the psychological interpretation of "The Frog King," see Bettelheim under Folktales.

kindergarten to fourth grade level user's guide to davenport's film "the frog king or faithful henry"

The selection of questions and activities in this section is based, in part, on issues which interested or concerned kindergarten through fourth grade children during our field testing. Children of this age talked about promises, about why the princess broke her promise and was that an acceptable thing to do. Generally, they tended to be morally dogmatic until we asked them if and why they had ever broken a promise. Whenever possible, therefore, we encouraged children to personalize issues the film raised by referring to their own personal experiences. Some of the vocabulary introduced includes words, such as conscience, which children themselves used in discussions.

The behavior and moral integrity of main characters also concerned children in this age group. As might be expected, they sympathized absolutely with either the princess or the frog, but not with both. Because of this, we have included several point of view activities which require children to draw on their imaginations in order to come to some understanding of another's point of view. Some of the point of view activities will be appropriate for five- and six-year-olds, while some will not, largely because preoperational children (ages two to seven) are tied to their own perceptions and are essentially unable to assume the viewpoint of others.

Children in this grouping span two developmental stages -- preoperations and concrete operations. Preoperational children are noted for their egocentrism and the tendency to focus on a single striking detail of an experience -- to the exclusion of other aspects. As a consequence they usually cannot see relationships in a work of art, such as a film, and they are usually unable to elaborate on their own responses. In the stage of concrete operations, however, children (ages seven to eleven) are capable of thinking logically about experiences and they can assume other points of view. In addition, concrete operational children can classify and organize experiences, developments which allow them to deal with a film on a more sophisticated level, taking into consideration the work as a whole.

Typically, there is no clear boundary between the two stages; instead, children go through a transitional period during which they exhibit the characteristics of both. Therefore, we have structured this section so as to allow for different levels of response. In Create a Drama, for example, very young children may simply retell the story as they remember it, while eight/nine-year-olds may reorganize and embroider the story to suit themselves. Unlike older children, younger ones may be unable to discuss the meaning of Animal Symbols with great depth or logic; nonetheless, they may be able to successfully design a frog car. In both stages, children tend toward literalism. Thus, rather than focusing on the symbolic nature of the film and folk material, most of the activities suggest things to do -- concrete activities which enhance children's understanding of the film and its symbolism.

In addition to our evaluation results and the group's level of cognitive development, we considered several other factors in developing this section. First, most five- to nine-year-olds are interested in animals, modes of transportation, collections, games, manipulative materials/activities, and dramatic play. Next, young children learn best by doing -- playing, talking, questioning, listening, inventing, and experiencing events directly. Our final consideration in preparing this section was to provide a balance of individual and group activities.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FILM

#1. Close your eyes and think about THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY. What pictures or sounds do you remember from the film? Can you tell us why you remember a particular picture or sound?

#2. Which character in the film did you like best? Why? How did the film make you feel about the character?

#3. If you could talk with the frog, what questions would you ask him? If you could talk with the princess, what questions would you ask her?

[Comments: The questions children ask often reveal which aspects of the film they understood and which they found confusing. Inviting them to ask questions has another function as well; it is a playful way of encouraging them to go beyond the information given in order to consider what they want to know. Urge children to generate imaginative questions, since (in contrast to many other learning activities) questions -- rather than answers -- are important here. The activity can consist entirely of asking questions without worrying about answers, --or, if it seems appropriate, the leader or individual members of the group could assume the role of either frog or princess and develop answers from their own imaginations.]

Activities Related to General Questions About the Film

Create a Drama: Working in small groups, children can mime or act out a portion of the story that appealed to them. Encourage children to use their imaginations to expand on or fill in details from the film.

Paint a Mural: Divide brown wrapping paper lengthwise into four sequential rectangles so that there is one section for each scene in the film (the well scene, the the dining scene, the bedroom scene, and the country road). Ask children to paint their own version of each scene. If the paper is very wide, several children can work on one scene at the same time.

Because children often associate frogs with wet or slimy textures, paint is an appropriate medium for exploring ideas and feelings evoked by this film. With very young children, finger paint would work particularly well -- especially for playing with transformations. As a lead-in to painting, ask children to name as many adjectives as they can which describe frogs.

Frog/Animal Poems: After reading William Blake's "The Tiger" (see Reed under Poetry in the bibliography), a poem which directly addresses an animal, ask children to write poems to the frog in THE FROG KING... Each

poem could have two parts: in the first, children ask questions to which the frog responds in frog sounds; in the second, children ask the same questions to which the prince responds in words.

To prepare for this activity, have children make up as many frog sounds as possible while the leader writes them on a chalkboard; encourage children to play with vocal inflections to communicate different frog feelings. Urban children might enjoy hearing the Folkways record, Sounds of North American Frogs, recorded by C.M. Bogart.

Variation I: The same type of direct address poem can be written to other animals, including the children's pets: see Lewis and Reed under Poetry in the bibliography.

Variation II: Children could make frog/king collages to go with their poems, using variously shaded and textured green paper. If children leave pieces unglued, they can play with transformations by combining the top of the frog with the bottom of the prince or vice versa.

Variation III: Children could write poems or letters from the frog's point of view, describing what it was like to be the frog in this film. For animals' letters, see Cullen, for poems from an animal's point of view, see Reed.

BAD DOG, a wry film shot from a dog's point of view, would be a wonderful stimulus for poetry written from an animal's point of view, or for drawings of familiar objects seen from the point of view of an animal; see the Film Review Supplement.

The Art of Filmmaking: Screen Davenport's background film, THE MAKING OF THE FROG KING (see Filmography), with children -- particularly third and fourth graders -- so they can see the "tricks of the trade" that went into the making of THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY. Ask them what surprised them most about the making of the film. Why did it surprise them?

After discussing the background film, screen THE FROG KING... again so that children can better understand how effects explained in THE MAKING OF THE FROG KING were carried out in the actual film.

An illustration from Arnold Lobel's The Frog and Toad Coloring Book (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

CHARACTERS, PROMISES & FEELINGS

#4. What did the frog want from the princess? Why?

#5. The princess promised to befriend the frog if he would retrieve her golden ball; but, once she had the ball in hand, she ran away from the frog. ■ Why did the princess break her *promise*? How do you think she felt about the frog? Are there times when it is okay to break a promise? Have you ever broken a promise? If so, why?

#6. Did you ever have a guilty *conscience*? Do you think the princess felt bad or had a guilty conscience for breaking her promise? ■ What is a conscience? Do frogs have consciences? Do babies have consciences? When do you think people develop consciences?

#7. During dinner, the father/king made the princess keep her promise. He ordered her to let the frog into the house, to share her food with him and to take him to her room. ■ How do you think the princess felt, at first, about having to keep her promise? How do you think she felt by the end of the film? ■ Have your parents ever made you do something you didn't want to do? How did you feel at first? How did you feel later on?

Activities Related to Characters, Promises & Feelings

Invent the Next Chapter: Ask children to invent the next chapter of THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY. What happens when the young king and princess arrive at the young king's castle? Children can write or tell their chapter; it could serve as the fifth panel in a painted mural or an additional scene to act out.

FANTASY/REALITY

#8. Why do you think the filmmaker made this film?

[Comments: This question is often the best way to help children think about the themes and intent of a film, since typically when young viewers are asked "What is this film about? " they simply repeat the plot.]

#9. Think about the following words: wish, lie, and dream. They are alike in some ways and different in others. How are they alike? How are they different? ■ Did anyone in the film lie; if so, when? Did any one make a wish; if so, when? Did anyone have a dream; if so, when? ■ Pretend the frog made a wish during the film; what would he wish for and why? Pretend the princess made a wish during the film; what would she wish for and why? ■ Pretend the frog took a nap after the princess ran away from the well; what would he dream about?

Activities Related to Fantasy/Reality

Poetry: Kenneth Koch's book, Wishes, Lies, and Dreams, offers many ideas for poetry activities which use children's own wishes, lies, and dreams as stimuli. With young children, painting and drawing are also appropriate for expressing wishes, lies, and dreams.

Try though he did, master artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) could not accurately depict a rhinoceros from other people's descriptions alone. This is the result.

ANIMALS & COLLECTIONS

#10. In the dining hall, the father/king had a *collection* of stuffed animal heads, or trophies, on the wall. Do you remember seeing a giraffe, a mountain goat, and a rhino? Why do you think the father hunted and displayed these animals? ■ What kinds of things do you collect? Why? How do you display your collection? ■ Animals are collected in special places: what are those places called? Have you ever been to a zoo or natural history museum?

Activities Related to Animals & Collections

Share Collections: As a follow-up, children could bring in one of their collections to share with the group. Discussing collections, their purposes, and their meanings (both to the collector and others) makes a fine introduction to a museum, zoo, or historical house; such an activity would make an excellent pre-visit orientation.

Bestiary: Introduce the word *bestiary*. Explain that a bestiary was a book that described different animals -- how they looked, what they ate, how they behaved, and sometimes what they symbolized. The bestiary, a collection of animal descriptions with illustrations, was an important source of information in the days before there were zoos or museums -- when cameras had not been invented, and travelling to distant places was something few people did. In those days, if you wanted to learn about animals from other countries, you studied a bestiary.

The problem with bestiaries was that often the people who made them had never seen the animals they were describing or drawing; they simply repeated the stories or copied the pictures of other people. Because of this, the books contained a great deal of misinformation. Along with lions, eagles, whales, and other real animals, many bestiaries included descriptions and pictures of animals that were not real -- imaginary animals, such as the *unicorn* and the *manticore*; see White under Animals in the bibliography.

Have children write and illustrate a group bestiary consisting of their favorite animals, birds, and insects -- real or imaginary. As part of a science project, children could base their bestiary entries on actual observation in the classroom, via film. (see Filmography) or at the zoo.

ANIMAL SYMBOLS

At times, people call something by an animal's name because it looks like the animal; at other times, people call something by an animal's name because they wish it had the animal's *attributes*. Are you familiar with the Volkswagon automobile called "the bug" or "the beetle"? Why do you think people call it that? ■ Volkswagon made another car model twenty years later called the "Rabbit." Does anyone know what it looks like? Do you think they called it that because it looks like a rabbit? Why do you think they called it the "Rabbit"? Can you think of other cars, everyday objects, or expressions with animal names? Why do you think they are called by those names?

[Comments: Car models have been named after diverse animals including: Cobra, Fox, Hornet, Impala, Colt, Pinto, Mustang, Eagle, Skylark, Thunderbird, Bobcat, Cougar, Jaguar, and Lynx. Everyday objects include monkey wrench, dog-eared book, and rabbit-eared antenna. Other familiar uses of animal symbols include expressions such as "to have a frog in one's throat" and "to pussyfoot around"; see Durant and Evans under Animals in the bibliography.]

Activities Related to Animal Symbols

Design a Vehicle: Design a vehicle called the "frog." What would it look like? How would it move? Draw a design for this vehicle.

State Emblems: Extend the discussion to an exploration of other things in contemporary culture (or in history) which have animal names and associations. For instance, every state has an official animal. Many were indigenous to that state; sometimes they simply represented qualities the state founders wanted to be associated with. Children could research state animals to explore the concept of animals as symbols; see Haverstock.

Team Emblems: There are football teams with animal names (Atlanta Falcons, Chicago Bears, Detroit Lions, Los Angeles Rams, Miami Dolphins, and Philadelphia Eagles). There are baseball teams with animal names (Baltimore Orioles, Chicago Cubs, Detroit Tigers, Saint Louis Cardinals, and Toronto Blue Jays). There are hockey teams with animal names (Boston Bruins, Pittsburgh Penguins, and the University of Wisconsin Badgers). Following the format of the State Emblems section, have children research the origin of these or other animal symbols in sports.

Personal Emblems: For a fanciful approach, have children design animal emblems for themselves or their families.

attribute	conscience	promise
bestiary	manticore	trophy
collection	metamorphosis	unicorn

Constellations and stars of the Southern Hemisphere, as depicted by Albrecht Dürer in 1515. Among the constellations is Canis Minor, Little Dog, one of the dogs of Orion.

fifth to eighth grade level user's guide to davenport's film "the frog king or faithful henry"

In developing this section of the guide, we tried to keep in mind the vast differences in the cognitive abilities, interests, and social concerns of children in grades five through eight. According to Piaget, this age range spans two developmental stages, concrete operations and formal operations. On the one hand, children may be able to abstract, and generalize about the broad implications of symbols; on the other, they may be bound to the concrete and literal aspects of things. While some may be able to think hypothetically and to imagine the future, others may be tied to their own experiences and able to think logically only about concrete problems and events.

One of the most obvious differences between children at this age is their capacity for introspection. Those who are capable of formal operations can think about their own thoughts and feelings as if they were objects; this, in turn, creates in them a greater interest in their own identity and their place in the world. Despite the fact that children in the concrete stage are capable of assuming the point of view of another, they cannot achieve the same kind of distance from themselves; thus, they are not as introspective.

At this time in their lives children also experience changes in physical development and the beginnings of socio-sexual interest. Simultaneous with this new interest in members of the opposite sex, the peer group becomes increasingly important and -- at least for older children in this age range -- replaces some of the functions adults fulfill for younger children.

Although individuals may be in either stage of operations (concrete or formal), many children in this group have one foot in each -- being developmentally rooted in neither. Consequently, they vascillate between old abilities or interests and new-found skills. With all this in mind, we have retained and further elaborated on some of the material in the kindergarten to fourth grade section. We have kept point of view, collections, and animal symbols for instance. But we have also introduced new material, such as conflict, intention, folklore, setting, and attitude towards animals -- material which is even more fully developed in the ninth to twelfth grade section.

Since learning by doing is still an important mode for this age group, we have included children's active participation in doing dramatic improvisations, telling stories, designing sets, and writing bestiaries among the related follow-ups. We have also tried, as we did in other sections, to use an approach to questions and activities which supports children's developing abilities and incorporates their interests and concerns.

During our field testing, children had much to say about the points of view of different characters, as well as the connections between point of view and character motivation. Of the three age groups with which we worked in developing the guide, children in the fifth to eighth grades talked most about the techniques used to present the story in film. They were particularly interested in the mechanics of the frog puppet, as well as in the frog's metamorphosis. Of the three age groups, they also talked most about the film's realism and had diverse opinions about its impact and importance. Cinema technique, lighting, costumes, props, and music made the film seem very realistic to fifth/sixth graders who considered it an asset, one which greatly enhanced the seriousness and believability of the film. Seventh/eighth graders, however, were critical of the contrast between the realism of the film's presentation and the fantastic nature of the character's behavior; the word unbelievable cropped up frequently in their image/sound skims. Both issues -- cinema techniques and realism -- are addressed under Realism & Illusion.

One urban group, composed primarily of Hispanic youngsters from the north end of Manhattan, remarked about the affluence in the film -- particularly as reflected in the dining room scene- an aspect which the liveaction technique emphasized. Apparently, this group thought the story was too "rich" to take place in a city -- at least a city as they knew it.

While this represents a valid response to that aspect of the film, viewers can be encouraged to see beyond the setting to the larger significance of the film, but they need the help of a sympathetic group leader to do so. We have incorporated this into the guide by asking viewers to discuss how the setting made them feel, and by having them design an urban setting for the film in which they can imprint their own details.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FILM

#1. Think about the film you just saw. What *images* or sounds do you remember? Can you find just one word to capture an image or sound (-- it can be a noun, adjective, or a verb)? Why do you remember that particular image or sound? How did it make you feel?

[Comments: The image/sound skim is a device for eliciting remarks about those film elements which are most significant to viewers. It works best as a stimulus to discussion if the leader moves quickly around the room and solicits words from many individuals before exploring why they recalled those particular images or sounds. In response to this exercise, a fourth/fifth grade mentioned: ugly frog; yucky crayfish; nice frog; gold ball; brrump-brrump; scared girl; and honest king. An eighth/ninth grade noted: frog's voice; when he splashed in the soup; and her expression was an "Oooh!" when the frog jumped in the soup.

#2. Who do you think was the main character in this film? Why? How do you feel about that character? Why?

CHARACTERS & CONFLICTS

#3. A *conflict* is a struggle between opposing needs or wishes, opposing feelings or ideas. During the dining scene, the father/king and the princess have a conflict about how to treat the frog. ■ What was the king's *point of view*? Why? What was the princess' point of view? Why? Were there any other conflicts in the film?

#4. Why do you think the princess broke her promise to the frog? What would you have done? Have you ever broken a promise? If so, why?

#5. What did the frog want from the princess? Why? Do you think it was a fair request?

#6. Think about how the princess felt toward the frog at the beginning of the film; think about how she felt at the end of the film. Have you ever disliked someone at first but later changed your attitude towards them? What provoked your change in feelings? Why do you think the princess' feelings changed?

Activities Related to Characters and Conflicts

Improvisation: Small group improvisations are an excellent way to allow children to work through and personalize typical, everyday conflicts. The purpose of an improvisation is to have participants take a character's point of view and develop an empathy for her/him; thus, it is important that they understand their character. A good preparation is to have the entire group discuss the personalities of the characters -- princess, frog, father/king.

Improvisations can be developed in several ways. One way is for the leader/director to briefly describe the characters and dramatic situation to everyone together, both actors and observers.

Another approach is for the leader/director to set the scene (characters and plot for everyone -- as above) but then tell each actor, in private, an important bit of character information (background, motivation, etc.) that is kept secret from other actors and the observers. In this approach -- which would be particularly effective in situation three below -- everyone shares basic information about how the story will evolve, but certain things are surprises which children must handle as they arise. An example of character information for the princess would be that she was a perfectionist about her clothes and could not stand to have them soiled (background), or that her father was a rigidly moral man and they frequently had fights about what was "right" -- fights the princess provoked in hopes her father would become a bit more "human" (background and motivation).

In the process of doing an improvisation -- at least with the early ones -- the leader can assist children by asking questions, such as: "Are you sure your character would do or say that?" The leader can structure the improvisation by setting time limits for each scene (and letting actors know, periodically, how much time is left). After each group of children does its improvisation (one group can do the first scene, another the second, and another the third), observers can discuss why characters might have behaved the way they did; they can also evaluate how effectively conflict was resolved.

Situation 1: Two of the princess' friends go with her to the well and witness her meeting with the frog. One friend supports the princess' decision to renege on her promise; she feels exactly the way the princess does. The other friend has a high sense of justice and feels the princess must keep her promise. ■ What do each of the characters say? How do they behave? How do they resolve the situation, if at all?

Situation 2: The frog character is a "new girl (or boy) on the block" in contemporary America; she is lonely and eager to make friends. While riding her bike (Scene One), she encounters the "princess" struggling to change a flat. After the new girl helps fix her tire, the princess is grateful and impulsively invites the girl to a slumber party.

By the time the slumber party begins (Scene Two), the "princess" has had a change of heart. She wants to be with her old friends and the idea of including a new person is disagreeable. Friend number one feels just the way the princess does -- even more so. Friend number two, the voice of conscience, feels the princess cannot retract her invitation. ■ What happens when the new friend (the frog) arrives at the party? How do the characters behave? What do they say? How does the conflict take shape, and how is it resolved?

Situation 3: Reenact the conflict between father/king and princess at the dining table. Start when the frog first knocks the door; this time however, include dinner guests in the conflict (i.e., give them lines of dialogue).

For groups that are capable of working on an advanced level, ask the princess to choose one of the following as a model for her character: Cinderella; Gretel; Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz; Pippi Longstocking; Laverne or Shirley from the TV program; Caroline Ingalls, the mother in "The Little House on the Prairie"; or one of the Angels from "Charlie's Angels." Ask the father/king to choose one of the following as a model for his character: Mr. Jefferson from "The Jeffersons"; Yoda from THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, Charles Ingalls, the father in "The Little House on the Prairie"; the Fonz from "Happy Days"; the father in "Hansel and Gretel"; Blue Beard; or the giant from "Jack and the Beanstalk."

Situation 4: Make up the character of Faithful Henry. When he first learns the young king's spell is broken by the princess, how does he react? How does he relate to the princess? How do the two of them get along?

Situation 5: Ask children to make up a comic or soap opera version of the dining scene in which the princess brings the frog home -- just as she promised. What does her father do and say? (Consider Spencer Tracy and Sidney Poitier in GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?) Add family members -- brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, -- who participate in the conflict.

Compare Films: Dramatic conflicts can be within one character (internal) as well as between two or more characters (external). In THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, dramatic conflict is external; conflict occurs between the princess and her father. THE WHITE HERON (see the Film Review Supplement) is a film that, like THE FROG KING..., deals with themes of responsibility, faithfulness, and growing up; its main dramatic conflict occurs within the mind and heart of the film's protagonist, Sylvy.

In THE WHITE HERON, Sylvy is befriended by a handsome young man, a hunter/naturalist who is searching the woods of Maine for a white heron he hopes to add to his collection of stuffed birds. Since Sylvy knows the animals and woods so well, the hunter asks her to help him in his quest. Tacitly, Sylvy agrees because she is attracted to the young man; however, when she seeks out the bird on her own and sees it soar gracefully above the saltmarsh, Sylvy is unable to lead the hunter to the bird. Sylvy has a conflict between her feelings for the heron (and all it symbolizes) and her feelings for the hunter, whose friendship may be lost if she refuses to help him.

This film, like THE FROG KING..., was adapted from literature; it is based on "A White Heron," a short story by Sarah Orne Jewett. Both films take place in America at the turn of the century and both involve adolescent female protagonists, animals, parental conflict, and isolated forest environments. They therefore offer rich material for comparison.

At some point after children have seen THE FROG KING..., screen THE WHITE HERON and ask your group to discuss the film's dramatic conflicts. ■ How did Sylvy handle or resolve her problem? How else could she have handled her conflict? (Encourage children to develop both real and fanciful conflict resolutions.)

After that, have children review the similarities (setting, protagonist, etc.) and the differences (internal/external dramatic conflicts, resolution of conflict) between THE WHITE HERON and THE FROG KING... Ask children to compare characters (princess/Sylvy, father/grandmother, frog/hunter). Ask them to compare the issues (responsibility, faithfulness, growing up) as developed in each film.

An illustration by Percy J. Billinquist from A Hundred Fables of Aesop (New York: The Bodley Head, 1899)

THEME & INTENTION

#7. Why do you think the filmmaker made this film?

#8. Sometimes, each person who hears a story or sees a film thinks it means something different from what another person thinks it means; each person has his/her own *interpretation*. Some people think that THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY is about how people grow up. ■ What do you think? Did the princess grow up in this film? What about the frog? Did he grow up? What did you see or hear that makes you feel this way?

FOLKLORE

#9. Most folktales like "The Frog King" were passed on by *word of mouth* for hundreds of years before they were written down. Few such stories were repeated exactly the same each time they were told; most were changed a little by each storyteller who thereby *imprinted* it with his/her own style and details. This is why there are often several different versions of a tale.

What do you think the phrase "word of mouth" means? What do you think the word imprint means? What are other possible uses of the word imprint? ■ Why do you think a storyteller might want to change a folktale? Can you give an example of how a storyteller (or translator) might imprint a folktale?

#10. This film is based on the version of "The Frog King" collected by the Brothers Grimm. At the tale's climax, the princess, in a fit of rage, throws the frog against a wall, whereupon he becomes a prince. In another version of the same story, the frog comes to the princess' bed each night for many nights. When she finally overcomes her disgust of the frog, she kisses him and he turns into a prince. ■ Which version of the story do you prefer and why?

Activities Related to Folklore

Compare Film/Print Versions: Compare the film to the Grimm tale on which it is based; see Colum or Segal under Folktales in the bibliography. In doing so, children can achieve some understanding of interpretation and imprinting, as well as the changes needed in transforming material from one art form to another. ■ How did the filmmaker imprint his version of "The Frog King"? What choices do you think he made in order to create the film?

Storytelling: Ask children to learn a folktale they like so that they can retell it to the group. Children may alter the tale a bit; for instance, they may want to change unfamiliar words or make lines of dialogue more contemporary. In some cases, they might feel the need to change a character description (changing a boy to a girl, for instance), more fully develop or eliminate certain characters, or change details in the plot. Suggest that they should make major changes only if it will improve the story.

[Comments: The introduction to Diane Wolkstein's book, The Magic Orange Tree, discusses storytelling and listening in Haiti. Being a storyteller, Wolkstein brings a special sensitivity to both the introduction and the tales themselves. Read the introduction to the children before doing the above activity.]

REALISM & ILLUSION

#11. When the princess throws the frog against the wall, he appears to turn into a person. Such a thing cannot actually happen; it is a film *illusion*. An illusion is a deceptive image or false impression. ■ How do you think this illusion is achieved? Describe another illusion in THE FROG KING...; how do you think it was achieved?

#12. A special effect is an illusion which occurs in a part of the film. Illusion, however, can also refer to the larger, more inclusive impression of the film as a whole. In THE FROG KING..., the filmmaker tried to make the film look *realistic*; he tried to create a life-like illusion. ■ Why do you think he did so? Do you think he was successful? What aspects of this film, if any, seemed realistic to you? What aspects, if any, seemed unrealistic?

#13. Sometimes a film is so successful in creating an illusion that it can make you believe things you would not normally find believable. In THE FROG KING..., for instance, the characters might seem to act realistically and believably, even though you know that the plot and character behavior are fantastic -- they could never happen. ■ Did THE FROG KING... draw you into its illusion? Did you find the characters believable or unbelievable -- and why? What about the acting or the situation itself?

#14. Everyone knows that frogs do not speak in English or any other human language. Why then, do you think the filmmaker made the frog talk, instead of, for example, having a narrator explain the frog's thoughts and wishes?

Activities Related to Realism & Illusion

See How the Film Was Made: In the documentary, THE MAKING OF THE FROG KING, a look behind the scenes at the production of the folktale film, the filmmaker exposes some of THE FROG KING's... illusions and reveals other "tricks of the trade." Allow viewers to brainstorm for a while about how THE FROG KING's... special effects were achieved, then show them THE MAKING OF THE FROG KING. Ask them if the documentary surprised them in any way and if so, how. Ask them what factors affected the way THE FROG KING... looked.

Compare Two Film Versions of the Same Tale: When a film is very successful in making viewers believe its illusions, people *suspend their disbelief*; this is a long way of saying that the film makes them believe in it. Some filmmakers help viewers suspend their disbelief by creating an obvious fantasy, one which viewers accept as a fantasy and, in so doing, suspend their disbelief.

Lotte Reiniger created a film version of "The Frog King" called THE FROG PRINCE (see the Film Review Supplement), a highly stylized silhouette animation with little emphasis on realism. Screen THE FROG PRINCE and THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY and ask viewers to compare their techniques. ■ What kind of illusion does each create and why? Which film was better able to bring the story "to life" for you -- and why? Was either filmmaker successful in helping you suspend your disbelief -- and if so, what did s/he do that made you accept his/her film? Which film did you prefer -- and why?

An example of the medieval style of dress depicted in Pre-Raphaelite paintings and illustrations. This was an illustration by Walter Crane for Household Stories.

TIME & PLACE (SETTING)

#15. Before discussing the setting of THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, read children the narration from the beginning of the film:

> In olden days when wishing still helped, there lived a king whose daughters were all beautiful, but the youngest was so beautiful that even the sun which had seen so much, was astonished every time it shone into her face. Close by the king's palace lay a great forest and under an old oak tree was a well.

What is the meaning of "In olden days when wishing still helped..."? When do you think that time could have been? Why do you think the tale starts with this narration?

[Comments: Perhaps because of the "Pre-Raphaelite" illustrations in many fairytale collections, children and adults often recall "The Frog King" as taking place in a European castle during the Middle Ages. In fact, the actual text of the tale sets it in a vague, indeterminate time and place.]

#16. When the filmmaker created this film, he imprinted the story with his own details. He chose a special time and place in which to set the film. ■ When and where do you think this film takes place? What clues in the film suggest this to you? How does the setting make you feel?

[Comments: While deliberately restricting certain details, filmmaker Davenport gave the tale a uniquely American flavor. The film is set on the estate of a turn-of-the-century "American king" -- a robber baron like Vanderbilt or Rockefeller. Clothing, furniture, lighting, architecture, servants, and characters' speech offer clues to time, place, and socio-economic milieu. For additional information on robber barons see Boardman under History in the bibliography.]

Activities Related to Time & Place

Design a Setting: Have children design their own settings (time and place) for this film, using postcards, pictures from magazines, or their own drawings; suggest that children try urban as well as non-urban settings. Children can research a period in American history in order to make their settings *historically accurate*, or they can create settings based on imagination. Once they have designed the setting, they could recreate the story in that setting, either by telling it or by performing it as a drama.

Research Clues: Any of the setting clues could be researched by children as part of a social studies activity or in preparation for a visit to an historical house of the Victorian, pre-World War I period. Research topics could include the history of clothing, furniture, or architecture in the United States.

ATTITUDES TOWARD ANIMALS & ANIMAL SYMBOLS

#17. The dining scene was filmed in a turn-of-the-century house in Virginia, the owner of which hunted big game animals in Africa and Europe. The room was originally designed as a place to display animal *trophies*, some of which are visible in the film (There are rhinoceros, zebra, giraffe, lioness, mountain goat, and several antelope or deer.)

Can you identify any of the animal trophies in the room? How do you think the father felt about those animals? ■ Think of his behavior toward the frog. How do you think he felt about the frog? Can you imagine seeing a stuffed frog among the other animals? Why or why not?

[Comments: These questions address attitudes toward animals that are implicit in the film. Often such attitudes are apparent in a culture's *symbols* as expressed in folklore, folk customs, language and art. In Western culture, big game animals are awarded a respect and awe which are denied to frogs; see Cooke, Donaldson, Evans, Haverstock, and Sun under Animals in the bibliography.]

Activities Related to Animal Symbols

Explore Animal Symbols: Have each child research two or three animals from a particular culture to determine how those animals were regarded, what attributes or phenomena they were associated with, as well as what they symbolized and why.

For example, the Egyptian ibis -- a wading bird related to herons and storks -- lived in cliffs along the Nile and always migrated just before the river's annual flood; thus, ibis were associated with water, the Nile, and the annual phenomenon of flooding. After years of observation, people along the Nile learned that if they left when the ibis did, they could avoid the ravages of flood season; thus, people regarded the bird with respect and it played an important role in their lives. In time, the ibis came to be associated (symbolically, in Egyptian art and religion) with the goddess of the moon, as well as lunar cycles, since the flooding of the Nile was affected by the annual lunar cycle.

Ba, the Egyptian symbol for the soul. Depicted as a bird with a human head, its image perhaps derived from the huge white owls that inhabited early tomb pits.

Urge children to vary choices of animals so that the group, as a whole, can cover more information. Later, if they share their research as a group, children may find that an animal's significance varies from culture to culture, as well as that, within the same culture, some animals are regarded more highly than others.

[Comments: Certain cultures abound in animal symbols; Native American and African nations are particularly well documented, as are animals in Egyptian, Indian, and Japanese cultures. Check with the education departments of your local art and natural history museums to see if those institutions have any artifacts or exhibits that are relevant to the study of animal symbols; also, consult your public library for print and media resources.]

Bestiaries: In ancient times up through the Middle Ages -- before our knowledge of animals became at all scientific, before the proliferation of zoos and the development of photography, Europeans learned about animals from bestiaries. A *bestiary* is a type of natural history book that deals only with animals -- what they looked like, how they behaved and, sometimes, what they symbolized; see Rybot under Animals in the bibliography.

Have children write and illustrate their own bestiaries as part of a science, English, or social studies project. To lay the groundwork, have them read and compare entries about the same animals from different kinds of animal books -- a scientific encyclopedia (such as The Larousse Encyclopedia of Animal Life), a compilation of personal observations (such as Renard's Natural Histories), and a bestiary (such as White's The Bestiary). Using these or other books as models, children can choose a style for their own bestiary, ranging from scientific to personal or fanciful.

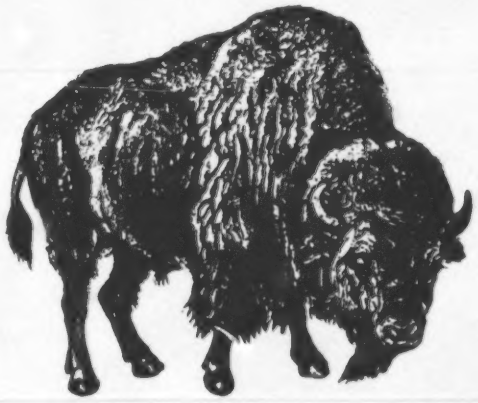
Variation I: As a long-term project, children could explore how human perception of an animal changes with information, and how information shapes cultural attitudes towards that animal.

Have small groups of children work together on the following activity:

(1) Describe an animal based on what you already know about it; (2) describe the same animal after reading about it in literature (from folktales and fables to poetry and astrology); (3) describe the animal based on actual observation in a zoo, a documentary film (see the Filmography), or in your neighborhood; (4) invent a fantastic and/or humorous description for the same animal, using imagination to get at the essence of the animal's character and attributes; and, after doing all the above, (5) describe what you think the animal best symbolizes or represents. The animal should have a wide-ranging cluster of descriptions and each group's animal could form an entry in a bestiary.

[Comment: The wolf would make a wonderful subject for this activity. In the past, wolves were little known except where they attacked livestock, so they developed a reputation as antisocial killers which is reflected in literature (the big bad wolf) and in bestiaries. Recently, wolves have received serious attention from zoologists and anthropologists. As its intricate social structure and habits are better understood, the wolf's reputation is changing; the film, THE DEATH OF A LEGEND, chronicles this change. Another film, THE WOLF AND THE WHITE TAIL, documents the ecological interaction between timberwolves and white tail deer in the Western United States. Either film could serve as the basis for a long-range research project on wolves and their image in literature and life.

Gorillas have been similarly misunderstood. GORILLA is an hour-long documentary which sets straight certain fallacies about the big apes and chronicles the current state of knowledge about them. KING KONG, the popular late night monster movie is a contemporary gorilla myth (with interesting parallels to THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY). Have children compare the two gorilla films and discuss the animals as both symbols and real creatures. The above films are annotated in the Filmography.]



The bison, an indigenous oxlike ruminant of North America, was a character in many Native American tales and became a symbol on the "Buffalo Nickel."

ANIMAL COLLECTIONS

#18. Some viewers are surprised by the animal trophies in this film. How do they make you feel? Why? Why do you think the father/king hunted big game animals? Why would he want to display his trophies?

#19. In the past, some people designed special rooms in which to display hunting trophies. Since those rooms were only visited by their friends, few people ever saw them. Today, museums such as the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, or the National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC, have enormous collections of stuffed animals, many of which are on public display. ■ Why do you think museums collect and exhibit animals? Do you think they do it for the same reasons people did in days gone by? How are museum collections like or different from the trophies visible in the film?

[Comments: In addition to displaying artifacts and objects, museums have other functions, some of which are little known. For instance, research is the primary function of the American Museum of Natural History; its staff consists of over 150 scientists and their assistants who work in fields from Anthropology to Vertebrate Paleontology. The museum also employs a large number of people who plan, and organize exhibits. In addition, most museums (both natural history and art) employ people who specialize in the preparation and shipping of objects or artifacts for loan so that other institutions may exhibit them or use them for research. Older students could research some of these functions as a prelude or follow-up to visiting a museum, zoo, or botanical garden. See Hellman under History in the bibliography for information on the Museum of Natural History. For information about animals in art museums, see Clark, Cooke, and Haverstock under Animals in the bibliography.

bestiary	imprint	suspend one's disbelief
conflict	improvisation	symbol
historically accurate	interpretation	trophy
illusion	point of view	"word of mouth"
image	realistic	

ninth to twelfth grade level user's guide to davenport's film "the frog king or faithful henry"

The ninth to twelfth grade section of the user's guide was prepared with several factors in mind, adolescent development being primary. At this stage, young people are interested in both how the world works and how it might work differently. In works of art, this translates into an interest in formal elements such as mechanics and structure, meaning -- themes and symbols, and value -- how the point of view in a particular work interacts with the adolescent's own world view.

Older teenagers, being firmly at the stage Piaget calls "formal operations," can go beyond the information given to consider motivation, cause/effect, and the implications of a work of art. In addition, they can separate the objective characteristics of a work from their subjective responses to it and analyze the interaction of the two. As will be obvious from the subheadings, we strove to reflect the interests and cognitive abilities of adolescents within this section of the guide. Topics range from symbols, themes, and structure to artistic choices and comparing different art forms.

As in the other sections, the results of our field testing were also considered. Adolescents in our test groups were concerned with whether or not character behavior resonated with them as true. In addition, they had questions about why the filmmaker decided to change the mode of presentation from active to narrative at the end of the third scene, and why he chose a liveaction technique for the film. Whenever possible, we incorporated these concerns into the questions and/or the activities.

In developing this section of the guide, we have emphasized the process of thinking an issue or idea through. This approach seemed most fitting, considering this age group's developmental tasks of seeing and responding to the world as it really is -- not only as they think it should be--and achieving some degree of emotional independence and freedom from authority.

As one might expect, adolescents responded to the film's sexual implications and symbolism. However, perhaps because they are so close to the sexual and maturational conflicts expressed in THE FROG KING..., teenagers were reluctant to discuss them. Unfortunately, avoiding this aspect of the film left an uncomfortable residue of feelings which interfered with subsequent discussion. On the other hand, it did not work to force a discussion about the sexual aspects. Because of this, we strongly suggest doing either the image/feeling skim or the image/feeling notation as the first step in talking about THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY. These activities are open-ended enough to allow unarticulated and vaguely formed feelings to emerge and be expressed in relation to specific film elements. Since they focus on concrete aspects, these activities help create a safe distance between the viewer and his/her personal associations to the film.

In any case, we suggest screening the film more than once so that viewers may better appreciate and understand the many levels of symbol and meaning in this folktale film.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FILM

#1. What did you see and how did it make you feel?

[Comments: In doing this exercise it is important to encourage viewers to offer very specific descriptions of what they saw in the film -- not simply what happened.

This question -- actually an image/feeling skim -- is a variation on Richard Lacey's image/sound skim. It serves several functions, the first of which is to get at the content of the film. As Lacey explains in Seeing with Feeling, "...the pictorial values in a film -- the details, the elements of rhythm, color, pace, and composition -- are the content even though this content may be difficult to describe in words. As Durgnat points out [in Films and Feelings: M.I.T. Press, 1967], the actor's facial expressions and gestures, the director's spatial relationships, and the way a cameraman may have caught a particular shade of gray all combine to communicate an experience forcefully. Although these details are often called 'style' and theme or emotion is called 'content,' the two concepts are actually inseparable." (See Lacey, especially pages 55-63, under Filmmaking in the bibliography; see also THE FROG KING... in the Film Review Supplement for examples of the image/sound skim.)

Second, by relating their feelings to specific images and sounds, viewers begin to explore how the film achieves its impact. In doing the skim, it is important that viewers focus on how the content made them feel, rather than how they felt about the content which is a value judgment and will not necessarily lead them to a deeper understanding of the meaning or impact of the film. There is a major difference between a value judgment such as "It was dumb" and the sort of response the skim can elicit: "When she threw the frog at the door, I was surprised."

Third, specific aspects in the film can provoke different responses among individuals. By comparing and discussing their own responses, group members can discover that individuals often experience the same film event differently since everyone brings different expectations, different experiences, and different world views to the film.

Lastly, in the process of discussing both what they saw and how it made them feel, viewers not only gain insights into their own experience of the film, they allow others to share that experience. One person's response may trigger (by amplification) another's understanding of their own reaction, or it may elicit (by contrast) a dissimilar response. There should be no particular agenda for the nature of the responses; however, since the process usually reveals those aspects of the film which are most significant to individuals as well as the group, the image/feeling skim can help the group's leader determine which questions and activities would be most fruitful to pursue with that particular group.]

Variation: As they watch the film, ask viewers to write down their feelings, and a word or two to indicate the image or aspect which gave rise to each feeling. All feeling descriptions should complete the sentence, "I feel _____." -- and (as in the image/feeling skim) they should be personal responses, not value judgments.

Ask viewers to note several feeling/images for each scene as the film progresses. The leader can give participants a helpful structuring device for their lists by telling the group when a scene ends; they can thus draw a line across the page to indicate scene divisions. When the film is done ask the group to share responses --

what they felt and what they saw that gave rise to their feelings. By referring to their lists, viewers can review the film chronologically, one scene at a time.

[Comments: This process, called an image/feeling notation, is essentially a written version of the image/feeling skim. However, it sheds light on the structure of a film -- and how that structure is used to manipulate viewer expectation -- in a way that the random image/feeling skim cannot.

The image/feeling notation is best done while the film is being screened, a time when viewers are most connected to their affective responses. Since writing can be a distraction, and may prevent viewers from fully experiencing the film, we suggest that you screen the film twice in succession, without any discussion between, and do this activity during the second run-through.

The image/feeling notation is a particularly effective method for using the film in the classroom. If, on day one, you screen the film twice and do the notations, you can resume with a discussion of the notations on the second day before going on to other topics, such as structure and artistic choices, for example. In other situations -- film evaluation workshops or college classes -- the entire process can be done within the same period.]

SYMBOLS

#2. Films and folktales communicate through symbols. A *symbol* may communicate *literally* by what it actually is or *denotes*, or it may communicate *metaphorically* by what it represents, suggests, or *connotes*. In this film, the golden ball is literally a toy, but because it is a perfect golden sphere, it is also a metaphor for innocence. When the princess first plays with the ball, she is unburdened by responsibilities or promises. Once she drops it in the well, she loses this blissful state and must face the responsibilities of social contracts. Thus, the literal action of loosing the ball is a metaphor for the larger loss of childhood innocence. ■ What other symbols (images, sounds, or actions) in the film function metaphorically? How and what do they communicate to you, both literally and metaphorically?

#3. Before starting to film folktales, Tom Davenport was a documentary filmmaker. In commenting on the process of filming both genres, Davenport has said that "even in dramatizing folktales, it turned out that the challenge lay in imagining the possible significance of the every day and the close-at-hand." ■ Do you think the filmmaker made everyday objects significant in THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY? If so, how?

Activities Related to Symbols

Describe an Object in Two Ways: Ask viewers to pick an "everday and close-at-hand" object. Have them write a literal description of the object (How does it look, feel, smell, etc.?), then have them write a metaphoric description of the same object. (Imagine the significance of this object. What is it like? What does it remind you of? What could it symbolize to you or others?)

CHARACTERS & CHANGES

#4. In biology, the change from tadpole to frog is called *metamorphosis*. In this film, the frog undergoes a *symbolic* metamorphosis. ■ When does this metamorphosis occur? Describe the frog's behavior and appearance before and after his change. What does his metamorphosis mean to you? What do you think it symbolizes?

[Comments: In the film, the frog is turned into a prince because he provokes the princess to a point where she can no longer refuse to deal with him; since she is provoked, she responds angrily.

In another version of the same tale, the frog's metamorphosis is catalyzed in a different manner. The frog comes to the princess' bed for several nights. When she finally transcends her disgust of the frog and kisses him, he turns into a prince. Familiarity and acceptance, rather than anger, bring about the change and alter its significance. In this version, thematically related to "Beauty and the Beast," love precipitates the change; in the first version, the change precipitates love. Discussing similarities and differences in these versions of the tale may help viewers come to terms with the significance of the frog's metamorphosis.

#5. Does the princess go through any sort of change? Do her feelings, behavior, or appearance alter during the film? If so, how and why?

[Comments: Bit by bit, during the course of THE FROG KING... the princess is made to bear the consequences of her actions. As she lives up to the various conditions of her promise to the frog, her feelings of anger, disgust, and frustration escalate, until, in a fit of rage, she throws the frog against the wall. In a sense, she is also experiencing the metamorphosis of growing up -- a process often accompanied by strong feelings about new responsibilities and things which at first appear disagreeable.

For a detailed psychological interpretation of plot and characters, see Bettelheim under Folktales in the bibliography.]

Activities Related to Characters & Changes

Compare Films: After your group has seen and discussed THE FROG KING... screen LEGEND (see the Film Review Supplement) and ask them to compare the two films. Like the frog, the young man in LEGEND, a Native American folktale, is reviled by his would-be lover, a beautiful but vain woman who taunts him for his ugliness. In desperation, the young man searches the forest for the spirit-woman who asks him an ambiguous riddle. The young man's answer reveals his inner beauty and the spirit-woman transforms his face to match it.

On the way home, the man is attacked by a bear. After a brief battle he slays it, whereupon the bear turns into a lovely young woman. Freed from the curse which transformed her into an animal, the bear/woman agrees to marry the young man. When the vain woman who rejected the man sees him, she grows jealous of his new love and his new-found face. So that she can become even more beautiful, the vain woman seeks the spirit-woman and demands a new face for herself. As before, the spirit-woman creates a face that reflects the inner person, and the vain woman flees into the forest, screaming in shock and anger.

LEGEND and THE FROG KING...have many things in common. Both derive from oral traditions, both end ironically, and both deal with the theme of transformation (although its significance is very different in each film). In both films, a physical metamorphosis on the part of the male characters precipitates a change in the atti-

tude of the female characters; the young woman thus experience changes which parallel the experience of the young men. Ask viewers to compare the transformations in the two films and discuss how they are similar and/or different.

In stark contrast to the period costumes and realistic cinema technique of THE FROG KING..., LEGEND is done in modern dress with video solarization -- an impressionistic technique that abstracts actors' faces and the setting. Analyze and discuss these differences with viewers. Why did the filmmakers choose their particular settings and techniques? Were their choices appropriate for each film? ■ Imagine THE FROG KING... done in video solarization and LEGEND done in a realistic period style; how would such changes affect each film?

A Native American family totem of a bear-god from the Northwest Coast.

DRAMATIC CONFLICTS & THEMES

#6. One reason folktales have survived for so long is that they communicate something important to people of all ages young and old alike. By using symbol and metaphor, the language of art and dream, folktales offer commentaries on human nature and insights into aspects of life. ■ Do you think THE FROG KING... is about an aspect of life; if so, what -- and is it important? Does the film suggest any meaningful comments about human nature to you; if so, what?

#7. Folktales rely on dramatic conflicts to communicate their themes. Dramatic conflicts not only move the story along, but, because they derive from character, values, and situation, they are also important clues to what the story is about. ■ Each of the first three scenes in THE FROG KING... revolves around a dramatic conflict. Describe where and when each conflict occurs. Why did it happen and what did it lead to? What is each conflict about?

[Comments: In the well scene, the girl reneges on her promise to the frog, thus creating a conflict. In the dining scene, girl and father disagree about how to treat the frog. In the bedroom scene, the girl becomes furious when the frog insists she keep her promise. Thus, as the film progresses, the intensity of each conflict escalates.

Discussing these conflicts is one way to arrive at information about character motivation and theme -- what the film is about. It can also lead into an analysis of structure -- how the film is put together -- as well as the filmmaker's intent -- the reasons s/he constructed the film in that particular manner.]

FILM STRUCTURE

#8. Rescreen the film. Ask viewers to look carefully at the physical space, lighting, and setting of each scene; have them describe those aspects in the first three scenes. ■ How does the physical space, lighting, and setting change from scene to scene? ■ How these aspects are combined within a scene and how successive scenes are connected is called the *structure* of the film; how does its structure affect THE FROG KING...? Can you suggest a geometric figure to represent the structure of the film? Explain your suggestion.

[Comments: In each successive scene, the dramatic conflict escalates as the environment becomes more intimate. the forest scene occurs in a large, open space with bright natural lighting; the dining scene takes place in an enclosed space with artificial, indoor light; the bedroom is an even smaller space, lit by the dim glow of candles. In addition, each setting seems to take place at a higher elevation: the house is uphill from the well, the bedroom is upstairs from the diningroom.

It is possible to say that THE FROG KING... is structured like a pyramid which comes to a point at its climax when the frog is dashed against a wall. Other geometric shapes could be used to represent this structure; the actual shape does not matter as long as viewers can explain their choice with consistency.

The cutting of THE FROG KING... also contributes to the intensity of its climax. *Editing pace* increases as the film progresses, at least in the first three scenes. Sophisticated viewers might want to screen the film a third time to look at how pacing, camera angles, and distance of the camera from its subject fit the structure of the film and contribute to its meaning.]

#9. Why do you think the film is called THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY? What is Faithful Henry's significance? What is the function of the last scene in which Henry is mentioned for the first time? Does it fit the pyramid diagram of the first three scenes? If not, how could you depict it?

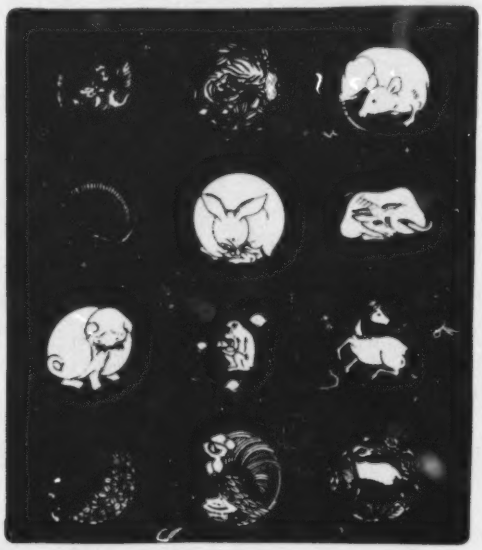
[Comments: Faithful Henry makes an interesting contrast to the princess; he remains true and faithful to the frog king throughout, while the princess initially breaks her promise of friendship. In a sense, Faithful Henry represents that which remains constant in friendship. By introducing Faithful Henry, the tale reaffirms the possibility for genuine faithfulness and trust in life.

Although this scene is almost an addendum to the film, it serves to close the story on a positive note, as well as to open the way for the beginning of a new tale -- a typical storytelling device. Thus, the scene does not fit into the structural pyramid. It would be more like a funnel or a "tail" attached to the top of the pyramid, leading off into a new story.]

FOLKLORE & IMPRINTING

#10. In the oral folk tradition, each storyteller would *imprint* a tale with his/her own details and style by varying aspects of language (such as rhythm, repetition, and degree of descriptive detail) and story (such as adding or reducing the number and role of characters, altering actions or conflicts -- as well as conflict resolutions, and shortening or lengthening the story by adding or eliminating sub-plots). As a result, there were frequently many versions of the same folktale. The story of "The Frog King" was told as early as the thirteenth century; versions of the story appear in the folklore of India, Hungary, Norway, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany. Tom Davenport based his film on a version of the tale recorded by the Grimm Brothers. ■ Read the original version of "The Frog King" (see Colum or Segal under Folktales in the bibliography) and compare it to the film. In what ways did the filmmaker imprint his version of the tale? In what ways did he preserve aspects of the Grimm version? Why do you think he chose to interpret the story the way he did?

Juni-Shi, the Japanese zodiac. Of the twelve different animals, only one -- the dragon -- is fantastic.



Activities Related to Folklore & Imprinting

Explore a Folktale: "The Frog King" follows a pattern in folklore called the beast marriage cycle. Many cultures have similar tales which revolve around the marriage or near marriage, of a human to a beast but vary in their details and animal symbolism. In the list below each culture indicated has a beast marriage tale about the animal on the left. Have students choose an animal/culture from the list and find a version of the suggested beast marriage tale.

Dog	Chinese and Native North American
Deer	Irish and Native North American
Snake	Basuto, Hindu, Indochinese, and Zulu
Fox	Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Native North American

Students can share their tales as a class and discuss the beast marriage pattern and its variations. ■ Why is this cycle found in so many new cultures? What is its significance to human beings?

[Comments: Some of these tales may be difficult to find unless viewers have access to a library with a comprehensive folklore collection; see Leach and Thompson under Folktales in the bibliography.

The following would also make fine comparisons to "The Frog King." The tales include: "Beauty and the Beast,"; "The Swan Maiden,"; Keats' "Lamia"; and KING KONG (a movie format of the basic tale);for additional information on KING KONG, see Amelio and Brosnan under Folktales in the bibliography, as well as the Filmography.]

ARTISTIC CHOICES & ART FORMS (Critical Viewing Skills)

#11. Filmmaker Tom Davenport decided to make his film with a liveaction technique. ■ Why do you think he chose that technique? What impact does it have on the film? Do you think liveaction is a fitting choice for a folktale -- why or why not?

#12. The filmmaker set THE FROG KING... on the estate of a wealthy American industrialist at the turn of the century (circa 1890-1910). Why do you think the filmmaker chose this setting? What impact does it have on the film?

#13. Other *artist's choices* affect a film. For example, once the frog is thrown against the doorway, the mode of presentation in THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY changes from that of largely dramatic action with minimal narration to minimal action with a heavy dependence on narration. Once the frog is transformed, instead of seeing the princess and young king marry and depart for his palace, viewers learn about this -- and about the events surrounding the young king's bewitchment --through the narrator's summary. ■ Why do you think the filmmaker chose to use a narrative presentation for the end of the film? How does it compare to the more dramatic presentation which preceded it? How does the shift in modes affect you? What does it communicate about the story?

[Comments: A possible explanation for the shift to narration is that events following the frog's transformation are not as important -- at least to the filmmaker -- as the actions which led to that event. In ending this way, the filmmaker seems to be emphasizing the part of the film in which the growth and development of the dramatic conflict occurs. Moreover, because the ending contrasts so obviously with the first three scenes, it leaves the climax as the most memorable event in the film and thereby heightens its impact. The narrative ending also mirrors the film's beginning; together, opening and closing narratives frame the action of the film and give it an appropriate sense of closure.]

Activities Related to Artistic Choices & Art Forms

Compare Different Art Forms: Different *art forms* have an impact on how a story is conveyed and, when a folktale is transformed from one medium to another, certain changes are required by the change in art form alone. In order to understand this transformation have viewers compare and discuss versions of "The Frog King" in different art forms: the folktale, "The Frog King or Iron Henry" in The Juniper Tree; the film, THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY by Tom Davenport; the poem "The Frog Prince" by Anne Sexton; and any illustration they find of the tale. ■ Which aspects of the folktale did each artist communicate best? How did the medium affect his/her choices? How did his/her artistic choices, such as treatment, focus, setting, degree of concreteness and/or abstraction, affect you -- and why?

Variation: A similar activity could be done with the Greek tale of Icarus and Dedalus. Viewers could compare and analyze the folktale, "Dedalus," in Bullfinch's Mythology; the film, SUN FLIGHT, by Gerald McDermott (see Filmography); the poem, "Musée des Beaux Arts," by W.H. Auden; and the painting, "The Fall of Icarus," by Breugel.

Look at the Artists: THE MAKING OF THE FROG KING (see Filmography) is a funny and informative documentation of how THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY was made. In exploring the problems, choices, and decisions involved in the production of THE FROG KING..., it offers an interesting sketch of both the film's protagonist, Ann Clark, and the filmmaker, Tom Davenport. Screen the documentary and discuss it. ■ How does this film make you feel about the filmmaker? How do you think he feels about making folktale films? How does this film make you feel about Ann Clark? Was she well cast?

ATTITUDES TOWARD ANIMALS & ANIMAL SYMBOLS

#14. The dining scene was filmed in a turn-of-the-century house, built by a man who hunted big game animals in Africa and Europe. The room itself was originally designed as a place to display his animal trophies. (The film shows viewers a rhinoceros, zebra, giraffe, mountain goat, lioness, and several antelope and deer.) ■ Can you identify any of the animal trophies in the film? Can you imagine a stuffed frog head on the wall with these other animals? Why or why not? What does the frog symbolize to you? What do big game animals symbolize? ■ Why do you think the filmmaker chose to film THE FROG KING... in a setting which included a display of big game trophies? Does this detail have any significance for the film? If so, what?

Activities Related to Attitudes Toward Animals/Symbols

Design an Advertisement: By studying animals in advertising, students can understand how animals function symbolically in media and language, as well as how advertising uses suggestion and implication to communicate.

Over a period of one or several weeks, have group members collect advertisements from magazines and newspapers which make direct or implied reference to animals (either through images or words). Analyze these ads as a group, discuss what animals are used, why, and how the animals relate to other images in the ad. Classify the ads by which aspects of the animal are used (physical attributes, behavioral attributes, literary associations) or by type of reference (visual only, verbal only, visual and verbal.)

After analyzing the ads, have group members design their own ads. They can draw or make a collage using cut-out images. They can choose a product to advertise, or the leader can assign a product. Instruct them to use animal symbols to sell their product; see Clark and Evans under Animals in the bibliography.

Variation I: In literature, writers use *similes* to make direct comparisons between one thing and another. Advertising copy can also use similes to compare a product to an animal (or animal attribute); in film, however, the visuals must have a weight of their own if they are to communicate effectively. Visuals must therefore stimulate viewers to make the intended comparison or connection. Have group members plan their ads in terms of a simile, such as "soft as a kitten," and explore ways to imply the comparison visually.

Variation II: This process of analysis and design can be done with television commercials, too. Viewers should keep a log of television commercials which make reference to animals; the logs can later be used for discussion/analysis. Viewers can then work in teams to design television ads in storyboard format. For an explanation of storyboards, see The Animation Book and Doing the Media listed in the bibliography.

Research Political Symbols: Political cartoonists frequently use animal symbols (American eagle, English lion, Russian bear, Democratic donkey, and Republican elephant). Cartoons with animals could be collected and their symbolic content analyzed. As part of a history activity, group members could research the origins of these symbols.

ARCHETYPES & STEREOTYPES

#15. Many works of literature (particularly novels) and most dramas draw their audiences into *empathy* with a main character through elaborate character development. Because of their brevity, folktales must evoke empathy with a main character in a different manner. To this end, folktales employ a type of characterization called archetypal.

In Jungian psychology, an *archetype* is an image which has been passed down, sometimes unconsciously, through the ages and is present in the minds or psyches of people today. In the sense we are using it here, an archetype has acquired a significance which is widely, perhaps universally, understood; thus, when people see a character who represents an archetype, they immediately know a great deal about that character.

An archetype can be the symbolic embodiment of certain attributes of character. There are archetypal villians (such as Darth Vader in STAR WARS, Captain Bligh in Mutiny on the Bounty, and the stepmother/witch in "Hansel and Gretel") and there are archetypal heroes (such as Hercules, King Arthur, and Wonder Woman.) But, in order to work, an archetype must be recognized -- or at least resonate subconsciously -- for what it is.

Sometimes the terms archetype and *stereotype* are confused. A stereotype is also a shorthand definition of character or a role in a story or drama. A stereotype, however, has less psychic resonance than an archetype and takes on negative connotations when it reinforces cultural prejudices. For instance, the "dumb blond secretary" can reinforce negative ideas about women as capable of only subservient positions but nice as decorations. The "tough loner lawman" can reinforce untrue ideas that men do not need involvement in social networks and do not have the full human range of emotions; in terms of the law, it can reinforce unconstitutional ideas that individuals can take the law into their own hands. There are numerous other negative stereotypes depicting ethnic groups and minorities as lazy, stupid, and inferior.

The easiest way to tell whether characters are stereotyped -- particularly main characters, since minor characters are usually only suggested -- is to analyze how predictable they are once their type has been established. If a character is flat, with no individual traits, no surprising dimensions, no complicating strengths and/or weaknesses -- then s/he is probably a stereotype.

■ What is the difference between an archetype and a stereotype? Which word best describes one or more characters in THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY? What did you see or hear that led you to believe this? If you believe a character is a stereotype, how could s/he be changed or improved?

Activities Related to Archetypes and Stereotypes

Analyze Characters: Have the group make a list of their favorite characters from television, comics, movies, novels, stories, or other folktales; (see Rugoff under Folktales in the bibliography). Select a few to analyze. Do the characters function as archetypes or stereotypes? Do any characters among the group's listing represent the same or similar archetypes? Do any of the characters represent stereotypes? Ask members to discuss the pros and cons of those characters which are stereotypes? Why do they like them? What could be some problems with the stereotypes the characters represent?

Authentic fourteenth-century costumes for a noblewoman and a knight. Compare these to the Pre-Raphaelite illustration on page twelve.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

#16. At certain periods of U.S. history, different groups of immigrants earned their living as domestic servants because they did not own land which they could farm and they had few marketable skills. This was true of the Germans and Norwegians who came to the U.S. throughout the 1800's, the Irish who came after the 1840's, and the Italians who came to the U.S. in the early nineteen-hundreds.

In the South especially, both before and after the Civil War, many Black people, like the butler in the THE FROG KING..., worked as domestics. (Although many servants in the South were Black, not all Black people were domestics or unskilled laborers.) In this film, the filmmaker cast a Black man in the role of the butler because he wanted to maintain the *historical accuracy* of the setting.

■ What is the filmmaker's attitude toward the Black butler in this film? How do you know? What is the difference between a character portrayal which preserves historical accuracy and one which perpetrates cultural stereotypes?

[Comments: Filmmaker Davenport used a Black butler because he wanted to imply a symbolic connection between the butler and the frog. Blacks in this country have experienced a plight similar to that of the frog in the film. Davenport writes:

> The princess breaks her promise at the well because she feels the frog is beneath her notice. ("She thought...he can be no companion to any human being.") This sort of attitude is the root of prejudice and political injustice to minorities. When the frog, however, is able to provoke her anger, he is no longer beneath her notice; he turns, suddenly, into a prince -- a person of great value and esteem.
>
> The archetypal drama of THE FROG KING... has been played out in the struggle of Black Americans for political justice. Our constitution stated that all men were created equal, but it was only in the late 1950's that the wise old men (fathers) of the Supreme Court ruled on school desegregation. Finally, it took riots, demonstrations, and further litigation for Blacks to achieve some real recognition.

The filmmaker's statement could be a lead-in to discussion with older groups or American history students. ■ How do you feel about the filmmaker's statement? Do you agree or disagree?]

archetype	empathy	metaphorically
art form	historical accuracy	precipitate
artistic choices	imprint	simile
connote	interpretation	stereotype
denote	literally	structure
editing pace	medium	symbol
	metamorphosis	

bibliography: filmmaking and film use

Gaffney, Maureen & Gerry Laybourne. What to Do When the Lights Go On. Phoenix AZ: Oryx Press, 1981.

A comprehensive resource for librarians, arts educators, museum educators, film programmers, community workers, and classroom teachers who want to use film in conjunction with participatory arts activities for children from three to over twelve. The book includes lengthy indexes and annotations of over 350 short 16mm films with age recommendations and suggestions for related activities. (Adults)

Jones, Richard M. Fantasy and Feeling in Education. New York: New York University Press, 1968.

An outstanding resource for anyone who wants to use film with children -- particularly children eight to twelve. Although it was designed as a critique of Jerome Bruner's social studies curriculum, "Man: A Course of Study," the book has applications that far exceed its intent. Jones deals eloquently with methods for incorporating children's emotional and imaginal responses into the curriculum as a means of enriching its cognitive base. Although the entire book is "must" reading, the second and third chapters -- specifically, "The Challenge of the 'New Social Studies'" and "Meeting the Challenge" (pp. 12-54) -- are helpful in terms of techniques for using and discussing films. The fourth and seventh chapters -- "Insight and Outsight" (pp. 55-86) and "Toward a Complete Theory of Instruction" (pp. 174-207) -- offer compelling frameworks for Jones' thesis. (Adults)

Lacey, Richard. Seeing with Feeling. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972.

An outstanding approach to discussing film with groups from junior-high-age up. Chapters two through four -- "What to Do When the Lights Go On," "Image-Sound Skimming: In-sight" and "Bag is Gab Spelled Backwards: A Dozen Devices" (pp. 11-87) -- are particularly helpful in terms of both overview and techniques. Despite the fact that this was written with older groups in mind, we have successfully used many of Lacey's techniques -- notably the image/sound skim -- with very young children. (Adults)

Laybourne, Kit. The Animation Book. New York: Crown, 1979.

This comprehensive guide to making animated films includes a chapter (pp. 76-81) on storyboarding. (Adults)

Laybourne, Kit & Paul Ciancolo, editors. Doing the Media. New York: McGraw-Hill Paperbacks, 1978.

A portfolio of activities, ideas, and resources about different media, this helpful book includes instructions (see index for page listings) for making storyboards, slide/tapes, filmstrips, 8mm films, and videotapes with children. (Adults)

Uhry, Joanna. "Operating on Metaphor: Using Film/Activities to Explore Feelings." Young Viewers (Vol 4, No 2), Spring 1981, pp. 3-8, 15.

A lucid article by a masterful teacher who has used film in many elementary school curriculum areas -- ranging from English and Social Studies to the Arts. Uhry discusses approaches for using narrative films and arts activities with young elementary-age children as vehicles for encouraging them to express their feelings about other people and themselves. Among her most successful films were three folktales: HANSEL & GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION by Tom Davenport; THE OWL WHO MARRIED A GOOSE by Caroline Leaf; and SUN FLIGHT by Gerald McDermott. (Adults)

animals, animals in art, bestiaries

Armstrong, Edward A. The Folklore of Birds.
New York: Dover Publications, 1958/70.

A cross-cultural study of the symbolism of birds, from prehistoric times to the present. A wonderful resource for older students and adults.

Clark, Kenneth. Animals and Men.
New York: William Morrow, 1977.

This handsome book documents the relationship between animals and humans as reflected in Western art from prehistory to the present. It has over 200 illustrations of animals in prints, paintings, book illustrations, mosaics, figurines, tapestries, reliefs, drawings, and statuary -- ranging from the cave paintings at Lascaux through Egyptian figurines to the sketches of Pisanello, Durer, and Audubon, as well as the paintings of Degas, Delacroix, and Catlin. While Lord Clark's commentary is properly scholarly, it is also lucid, well-written, and fascinating. (Grades 9-12 and adults)

Cooke, Hereward Lester.
Dogs, Cats, Horses & Other Animals in the National Gallery.
Richmond VA: Westover, 1970.

An interesting exploration of animal symbols and motifs in a museum collection.

Donaldson, Gerald. Frogs.
Canada: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1980.

Everything you ever wanted to know about frogs, from anecdotes and objective descriptions to frog symbolism in art and poetry. (Grades 5-12 and adults)

Durant, Mary.
In Pursuit of the Mous, the Snaile, and the Clamm.
New York: Meredith Press, 1968.

This dictionary gives the etymology of animal and insect names and how they relate to appearance and behavior. A wonderful resource, it includes over three hundred names, ranging from eagle and mustang to panther and squirrel. (Grades K-6 and adults)

Evans, I.H., ed. Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.
New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

The meaning and background of phrases which include animals, along with the symbolic meanings of animals in heraldry and folklore, is documented in this dictionary. Entries include the ape, ass, badger, bear, bee, cat, clam, dog, eagle, elephant, frog, goat, hog, horse, lion, serpent, and toad, as well as animal signs in the zodiac. (Grades 7-12 and adults)

Haverstock, Mary Sayre. An American Bestiary.
New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979.

With nearly 200 illustrations, this large and handsome art book deals exclusively with American depictions of animals by well-known and unknown, historic and contemporary artists -- ranging from Audubon, Bierstadt, Eakins, Homer and Wyeth to Graves, Indiana and Nice.

The chapter "Hearsay and Heraldry: Early American Animals," gives an interesting account of colonial and post-colonial animal symbols. (Grades 9-12 and adults)

Lang, Andrew, ed. The Red Book of Animal Stories.
Rutland VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1972.

A mixture of stories, personal observations and anecdotes about animals, the book includes some fantastic creatures, such as the phoenix. (Grades K-8)

Neruda, Pablo. Bestiary/Bestiario.
New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965.

A beautiful oversized book with woodcuts by Antonio Frasconi, this is a special bi-lingual edition of the Nobel Prize winner's poem about animals. In the 136 short lines, there is a fifteen-line section devoted to frogs. The entire poem is also available in a bi-lingual edition of Neruda's collected works, Pablo Neruda: Selected Poems (New York: Dell, 1970/72). (Grades 2-12)

Renard, Jules. Natural Histories.
New York: George Braziller, 1966.

A bestiary translated from the French, this is a poetic and highly personal description of nearly seventy animals -- ranging from ducks, swallows, and other birds to frogs, monkeys, sheep, and rabbits. Written in a style that blurs the line between prose and poetry, individual entries could be compared to sections of Neruda's Bestiario or White's The Bestiary. Renard includes an entry describing himself as an image hunter, itself an excellent "image" for poets, filmmakers, photographers, and certain artists. Originally written in 1896, the book is illustrated by Toulouse-Lautrec. (Grades 6-12 and adults)

Rybot, Doris. It Began Before Noah.
London: Michael Joseph, 1972.

A fascinating history of our relationship to wild animals and their significance to humans, it explores zoos and menageries from early days to the present. There is a chapter on the history of bestiaries and the origin of mythical figures such as the unicorn. (Grades 9-12 and adults)

Shaw, Richard. The Frog Book.
New York: Frederick Warne, 1972.

A delightful collection of short tales, stories and poems about frogs. The book includes Angolan and Bantu folktales, versions of Aesop's "The Frog and the Ox" and "The Frogs who Wished for a King," ten frog poems, and a fairytale called "The Frog" which is adapted from the Russian folktale, "The Frog Princess." The author has compiled similar books devoted to the cat, the owl, and the fox. (Grades K-4)

Sun, Ruth Q. The Asian Animal Zodiac.
Rutland VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1974.

An intriguing explanation of how animals in the Asian zodiac (rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar) are regarded in the folklore of China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, and Vietnam. Each of the twelve chapters is devoted to one animal and includes both a general cross-cultural background, as well as three illustrative folktales. An excellent resource for animal symbolism. (Grades 3-12 and adults)

White, T.H. The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts.
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980.

This paperback translation of a twelfth-century Latin bestiary has over one hundred illustrations, numerous clarifying footnotes, and an appendix by White which explains the evolution and historical importance of bestiaries. (Grades 6-12 and adults)

folktales and folklore resources

Afanasyev, Alexander. Russian Folk Tales.
Boulder CO: Shambala Publications, 1980.

Delightfully translated by Robert Chandler and richly illustrated by Ivan Bilibin, this collection includes "The Frog Princess" which would make an interesting comparison to the tale of the frog king. (Grades K-6)

Amelio, Ralph J., editor.
Hal in the Classroom: Science Fiction Films.
Dayton OH: Pflaum, 1974.

R.C. Dale's article, "Narrative, Fable and Dream in King Kong," on pages 103-112, describes the psychological effect of this pop-classic movie about beauty and the beast. (Grades 9-12 and adults)

Belpre, Pura. The Tiger and the Rabbit.
New York: Eliseo Torres & Sons, 1944/77.

The author, a storyteller by profession, shares -- in English -- the stories she learned in Spanish as a child in Puerto Rico. In addition to some animal tales, there is a Puerto Rican "Jack tale" called "Juan Bobo." (Grades K-5)

Brosnan, John. Future Tense.
New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.

"Things that Came (1930-1940)" on pages 47-49 discusses the symbolism in KING KONG. (Grades 9-12 and adults)

Bettelheim, Bruno. The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.
New York: Random House, 1977.

Bettelheim discusses the psychological meaning of over twenty folktales, including "The Frog King." An excellent resource for older students and adults.

Briggs, Katherine. Dictionary of British Folktales: Part A, Folk Narratives (Volume I).
Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1970.

An excellent resource for older students and adults, it contains five versions of "The Frog King" tale.

Bulfinch, Thomas. Bulfinch's Mythology.
New York: Thomas E. Crowell, 1959.

A classic resource for adults and older students.

Butler, Francelia. Sharing Literature with Children.
New York: David McKay, 1977.

A thematic anthology of literary excerpts, articles, and comments about literature -- including folklore, this helpful resource also has a well-balanced section on sex-roles. (Adults)

Campos, Anthony John. Mexican Folk Tales.
Tuscon AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1977.

A collection of Chicano tales translated into English by the author who learned them from his godmother who, in turn, learned them as a girl in Jalisco, Mexico. (Grades 9-12 and adults)

Chang, Isabelle C. Chinese Fairy Tales.
New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

A selection of Chinese folktales with several animal stories, including "The Noble Frog" -- a story similar to "The Frog Rider" below. (Grades K-9)

Chase, Richard. The Jack Tales.
Cambridge MA: Riverside Press, 1943.

An outstanding collection of folktales from Southern Appalachia. Although the book is currently out of print, it is in the reference or reserve sections of many libraries. (Grades 3-12 and adults)

Colum, Padriac, editor.
The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales.
New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

An outstanding collection, based on Margaret Hunt's translation, the book features a commentary by Joseph Campbell and an introduction by Padriac Colum. It includes "The Frog King." (Grades 6-12 and adults)

Faulkner, Wm. J. The Days When the Animals Talked: Black American Folktales and How They Came to Be.
Chicago IL: Follett, 1977.

Eleven tales in this collection relate to the experiences of Black slaves, offering insights into how and why the folktales evolved. Twenty-four other tales feature the trickster, Br'er Rabbit, whose ability to survive by his wits symbolized the spirit of an enslaved people. (Grades 3-8)

The Frog Rider: Folk Tales from China (Series 1).
Beijing, China: Foreign Languages Press 1957/80.

The first tale, a Tibetan story with a socialist "feel," is about a frog, born to elderly human parents, who marries the youngest of three princesses and tries to help the poor. (Grades 4-12)

Harden-Umolo, Chinwe Mary. The Griot Speaks: Stories and Folktales from the Black World.
New York: Medgar Evers College Press, 1979.

A wonderful collection of stories about, and tales from, Africa and people of African ancestry. Designed to be read by or told to young people, the collection includes animal tales about Br'er Rabbit and Br'er Terrapin, Noah and the Goat, and Anansi the Spider. (Grades 5-12 and adults)

Hughes, Ted.
The Tiger's Bones and Other Plays for Children.
New York: Viking Press, 1974.

A collection of radio dramas which includes an interesting and original Hughes' version of "Beauty and the Beast" for seven characters in which Beast is a bear. Older groups might like to produce it as a stage play for younger children or compare it to Perrault's tale. (Grades 4-12)

Iarusso, Marilyn Berg.
"Folktales and Legends in Children's Films."
Previews (Vol 7: No 1), September 1978.

An important resource for adults.

Leach, Maria, editor.
Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology & Legend.
New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1972.

A fabulous, concise resource for adults and older students on aspects of folklore.

Lurie, Allison.
Clever Gretchen and Other Forgotten Folktales.
New York: Crowell, 1980.

An antidote to the Cinderellas and Sleeping Beauties of most folk and fairytale collections, this group (reworked slightly by the author) includes active, resourceful, and independent heroines from Germany, Norway, Rumania, Russia, and Scotland. Among its tales are a Spanish version of "Sleeping Beauty" called "The Sleeping Prince" as well as "Mollie Whuppie," a Jack-like heroine. (Grades K-6).

Minard, Rosemary. Womenfolk and Fairy Tales.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.

A non-sexist selection of folk and fairytales featuring active, capable, and courageous girls or women. The

collection includes "Three Strong Women: A Tall Tale from Japan" and "Mollie Whuppie." (Grades K-6)

Opie, Iona & Peter. The Classic Fairy Tales.
New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

A collection of twenty-four well-known folk and fairy-tales as they first appeared in English. The book has an historical commentary for each tale and, despite some anti-German or anti-Grimm bias, the information is useful for locating stories with related themes in literature. The Opie's version of "The Frog King" is similar -- at least in its resolution -- to Katherine Briggs' "The Frog Sweetheart." Many historical illustrations accompany the tales; one by Arthur Rackham accompanies "The Frog Prince." (Grades K-12 and adults)

Rugoff, Milton.
The Penguin Book of World Folk Tales.
New York: Viking Press, 1949/77.

A wonderful, wide-ranging collection of over 150 tales from around the world. Aside from a fine selection of regional American tales -- including "Jack and the Varmints" from Chase's The Jack Tales, it includes Native American, Chinese, Greek, Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Latin American tales. The book itself, and each section within, has an informative introduction. (Grades K-12 and adults)

Segal, Lore, translator.
The Juniper Tree and Other Tales from Grimm.
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973.

This excellent collection includes "The Frog King" and has illustrations by Maurice Sendak.
(Grades K-12 and adults)

Stone, Merlin.
Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood (Volumes 1 & 11).
New York: New Sibylline Books, 1979.

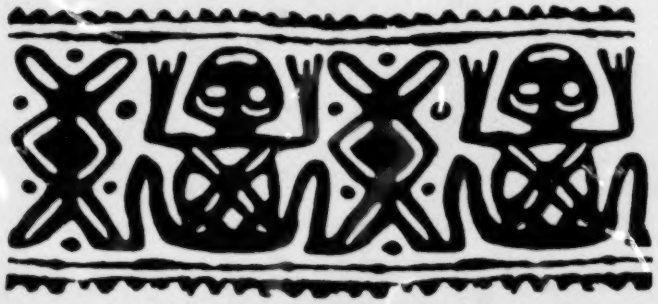
A feminist compilation of tales about ancient goddesses and heroines from many civilizations -- India, China, Egypt, Greece, Japan, Scandanavia, Africa, Oceania, the Semitic and Celtic peoples, and the native peoples of North and South America (including Chalchihuitlicue, Spider Grandmother, and other animal goddesses). (Grades 9-12 and adult)

Thompson, Stith, editor.
Tales of the North American Indians.
Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1929/72.

A comprehensive collection of myths, legends, and folk-tales with commentary by one of America's foremost folklorists. The tales include interesting examples of both trickster tales and beast marriages. (Grades 7-12 and adults)

Wolkstein, Diane.
The Magic Orange Tree and Other Haitian Folktales.
New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978.

An excellent resource with a fine introduction about the oral storytelling tradition. (Grades 5-12 and adults)



A pre-Hispanic frog stamp from Veracruz, Mexico. According to Mayan legend, frogs are the attendants and musicians of Chac, the rain-god.

history resources

Boardman, Jr., F.W.
America and the Robber Barons (1865-1913).
New York: David McKay, 1979.

The short introduction in this volume gives a good overview of turn-of-the-century industrialists. (Grades 9-12 and adults)

Hellman, Geoffery Theodore.
Bankers, Bones, and Beetles.
Garden City NY: Natural History Press, 1969.

A documentation of the first century of the American Museum of Natural History. (Grades 9-12 and adults)

poetry

Borges, Jorge Luis. El Oro de los Tigres.
Buenos Aires, Argentina: Emece Editores, 1972

An all-Spanish collection of poems by one of South America's best known contemporary authors; it includes two short poems directly addressing animals, "A un Gato" and "Al Coyote." (Grades 6-12 and adults)

Cole, William, editor. A Book of Animal Poems.
New York: Viking Press, 1973.

This wide-ranging collection includes two frog poems. (Grades 2-9)

Cullen, Countee. The Lost Zoo.
New York: Follett, 1968.

A humorous collection of poems about the animals off and on Noah's ark. There is a section in which animals write letters to Noah requesting special accomodations. (Grades K-4)

Koch, Kenneth. Wishes, Lies & Dreams.
New York: Random House, 1972.

A helpful guide for adults who want to explore innovative techniques for encouraging children to write poetry.

Lewis, Richard, editor. Out of the Earth I Sing.
New York: W.W. Norton, 1968.

A wonderful collection of poetry and songs of primitive peoples of the world; there are many references to animals. (Grades K-6)

Mackay, David, collector. A Flock of Words.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970.

An outstanding anthology of poems and excerpts from longer works, the book is arranged thematically. Included are D.H. Lawrence's "Kangaroo," Boris Pasternak's "The Zoo," R.M. Rilke's "The Panther," and a section from Edith Sitwell's "The Sleeping Beauty." (Grades 4-12 and adults)

Reed, Gwendolyn, compiler. Out of the Ark.
New York: Atheneum. 1970.

An excellent anthology of animal verse, with several works that address animals directly: "The Tiger" by William Blake, "To a Mouse" by Robert Burns, and "The Tortoise in Eternity" by Elinor Wylie. (Grades K-6)

Sexton, Anne. Transformations.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971.

With powerful imagery, Sexton interprets and expands seventeen Grimm folktales, including "The Frog Prince." Recommended for adults and mature high school students since some of the imagery is sexually suggestive.

filmography:

[Note: For information about BAD DOG, LEGEND, and THE WHITE HERON, see the Film Review Supplement which follows this filmography. Distributor information is located on the last page of this publication. All films are in color unless otherwise indicated.]

CONVERSATIONS IN RHYME
by Betsy Nadas Seamans & Joe Seamans 25 minutes
liveaction USA/1978 (Lumier Films)

This is a joyously humanistic documentation of the folk games and songs of Afro-American, Scots-Irish, Norwegian, Anglo-American, Greek, Italian, and Yiddish-Russian cultures. The film has five distinct sections: "Kisha's Song" records a lullaby sung to an infant by an elderly Black woman; "Roon About" shows an elderly Scots-Irish man demonstrating finger plays to a young boy; "Rooster, Hen, Pullet" shows face games between a young to middle-aged Black woman and several children of different ages; "Ride the Horsie" shows knee riding between a middle-aged man and a young boy; and "Pittsburgh Songs" shows an assortment of different rhymes and childhood games remembered by people of various ethnic groups. Over the centuries, parents, grandparents, and other relatives have lovingly transferred this folk material to children who, in turn, have passed it on to other children. In this work, the filmmakers are continuing that tradition; and, while illustrating how folk culture is transmitted, the film celebrates the richness of these conversations in rhyme as well as the tender ties between generations. An excellent stimulus for having viewers recall games and songs from their own childhoods. Although the film as a whole may be too long for very young viewers, we have used individual sections quite successfully with children as young as three years old. (Grades K-12)

DEATH OF A LEGEND by Bill Mason 51 minutes
liveaction Canada/1971 (National Film Board/Canada)

The wolf is threatened by human technology, largely because of unfounded myths that have grown up around the animal. Recent studies by wildlife biologists reveal that the wolf helps maintain the balance of nature. This film contains some exceptional footage showing the wolf's life-cycle and the social organization of the pack, as well as views of other animals in the Canadian wilderness. (Grades 5-12)

GORILLA by Barbara Jampel 59 minutes
liveaction USA/1981 (Karol Media)

This highly verbal, magazine-format documentary covers a great deal of information about the gorilla, a little-known ape that is facing extinction. Areas touched in the film include: gorilla myths -- particularly those exemplified by grade "B" monster movies and KING KONG; the problems of rearing gorillas in a zoo environment; language and intelligence research with gorillas -- including a sequence with Coco, the female gorilla who uses sign language; and the ongoing study of gorillas in their natural habitat -- including the poignant study of Digit, a gentle mountain gorilla. Both informative and moving, the film sheds new light on these great apes; perhaps -- as the Beston quote used in the film puts it -- it will lead viewers to regard animals as "other nations." (Grades 5-12)

HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION
by Tom Davenport 16 minutes
liveaction USA/1975 (Davenport Films)

A fast-paced and gripping treatment of the traditional Grimm Brother's tale of survival, set in Southern Appalachia during the 1930's depression. It effectively captures the dark side of childhood and lays it to rest when meek Gretel takes action. It helps to review the storyline with young children and to remind them that it's scary. (Grades K-8)

HUSH HOGGIES HUSH: TOM JOHNSON'S PRAYING PIGS
by Bill Ferris and Judy Peiser 4 minutes
liveaction USA/1978 (Center for Southern Folklore)

As this brief and delightful documentary demonstrates, people and animals will do the darndest things, but sometimes it is those very things which enrich the folklore of an area. Tom Johnson, a Southern Black farmer who was born in 1898, has trained his hogs to say a sort of "grace before meals" -- something he has been working on for thirty-five years. In addition to showing an unusual relationship between a human and animals, the film provides a wonderful jumping off point from which viewers can make up their own tales about "Farmer Johnson's Praying Pigs" -- especially if they are asked to narrate why and how the hogs were trained. The film can also be used to inspire research; viewers can talk to people in their neighborhoods, or members of their own families, to find out if anyone ever did something unusual in training an animal. (Grades 4-12)

KING KONG by Merian C. Cooper 100 minutes
liveaction/b&w USA/1933 (Films Incorporated)

A contemporary version of "Beauty and the Beast." A movie producer captures a primitive island monster and exploits it in New York with disastrous results. There is a newer version, but we recommend the original with Fay Wray and Robert Armstrong for its character depth, gripping plot, and pathos. (Grades 5-12)

THE MAKING OF THE FROG KING by Tom Davenport
12 minutes liveaction
USA/1982 (Davenport Films)

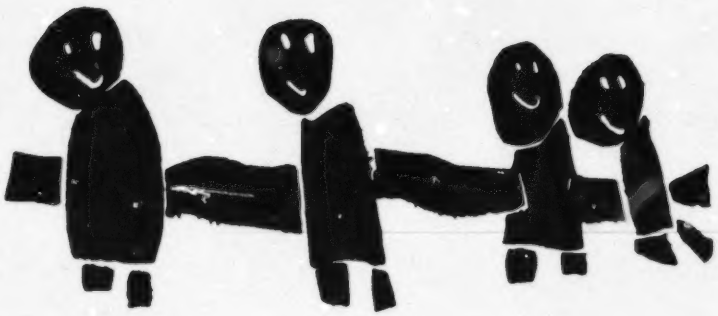
An amusing as well as informative documentary about how THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY was made. Filmmaker Tom Davenport shares with viewers the "tricks of the trade" and gives them some idea of the amount and type of preparation that went into making his film -- from research on frogs and the construction of a puppet frog which was used in certain scenes, to the selection of sites and location of props, including ten live frogs that were also used in the course of shooting the film. Ann Clark, who played the princess, talks about acting and how she felt about making the film. In one particularly funny scene, Ann and the frog puppet (manipulated by Julian Yochum) ad lib the scene at the well. (Grades 3-12)

SUN FLIGHT by Gerald McDermott 6 minutes
nonverbal/animation USA/1966 (McDermott Films)

A colorful, abstract and dance-like treatment of the story of Dedalus and his son Icarus. Banished to the very labyrinth they constructed for the cruel King Minos, father and son run through the network of mazes in search of a way out, but they find none. Eventually, some birds pass overhead and, with feathers they drop, Dedalus fashions wings for himself and his son so they fly to freedom, Icarus soars too close to the sun. Suddenly his figure turns brown, withers, and falls slowly into the sea. Dedalus lands safely but sadly laments his son's death. (Grades 2-12)

THE WOLF AND THE WHITE TAIL by Marty Stouffer
26 minutes liveaction USA/1979 (Stouffer Films)

Birth, growth, learning, survival, social networks, mating, death, and the balance of nature, THE WOLF AND THE WHITE TAIL examines these topics while exploring the interrelationship of wolves and white tail deer in the Rocky Mountains. This sensitive and carefully constructed documentary follows wolf cubs and fawns from birth to maturity. It takes great pains to emphasize the symbiotic nature of the predator/prey relationship. (Grades 3-12)



young viewers

Number 6: Winter/Spring 1982

film review supplement

In this Film Review Supplement, we review nine films -- works that are either folktale films or films that have some thematic relationship to THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY (the use of which is the focus of the issue). The films reviewed herein include:

ARROW TO THE SUN
BAD DOG
THE BENT TREE
A CHAIRY TALE
THE CREATION
THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY
THE FROG PRINCE
LEGEND
THE WHITE HERON

Both THE BENT TREE and THE WHITE HERON feature birds as subjects of the film and as metaphors. Other films which also use birds symbolically (and which are annotated in What To Do When The Lights Go On) include:

THE CREATION OF BIRDS
HOW BEAVER STOLE FIRE
THE LOON'S NECKLACE
MEDOONAK THE STORMMAKER
MOONBIRD
THE OWL AND THE LEMMING
THE OWL AND THE RAVEN
THE OWL WHO MARRIED A GOOSE
RUSSIAN ROOSTER

Both THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY and THE FROG PRINCE use frogs symbolically. Other films which also use frogs (which are annotated as well in What To Do...) include:

THE FOOLISH FROG
SOLO
WARTY THE TOAD (a frog look-alike)

For other folktale films see the following annotations:

ANANSI THE SPIDER
THE FISHERMAN AND THE FISH
THE MAGIC PEAR TREE
THE MAGIC TREE
THE STONECUTTER
A STORY, A STORY
THREE STONE BLADES
WHY THE SUN AND THE MOON LIVE IN THE SKY

For films dealing with themes of transformation see:

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
BOASTING
COCKABOODY
DORJE AND THE DRAGON
MINDSCAPE
TCHOU, TCHOU

For animal documentaries that could be used for the study of animals as well as animal symbolism, see:

BIGHORN
CHEETAH
DOGS
ELEPHANT
KODIAK ISLAND
OTTERS: CLOWNS OF THE SEA
PIGS
SNOW MONKEYS OF JAPAN

The films BAD DOG, A CHAIRY TALE, THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, and THE WHITE HERON explore point of view. For other films that also explore point of view, see the following annotations in What To Do...:

THE PERILS OF PRISCILLA
SELF-SERVICE
WHAT ON EARTH?
WHAZZAT

Almost all the films reviewed herein deal with conflict. For other films dealing with the same subject/theme, see:

CECILY
GERALD McBOING BOING
IMPASSE
A LITTLE GIRL AND A GUNNY WOLF
RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL
SOPHIE (AND THE SCALES)

[Note: All films are in color unless otherwise indicated.]

ARROW TO THE SUN by Gerald McDermott 12 minutes
cel animation USA/1973 (Texture Films)

Against a dark background, bright geometric shapes move across the screen, pulsating to the rhythm of flute and tom-tom. Among the shapes, the black silhouette of a cornstalk emerges. Two ears sprout, one breaks off -- turning gold -- and revolves until it is viewed in cross-section -- an image strongly resembling the sun. Thus begins the nearly wordless animation of a young Pueblo sun-god's quest to find his father, a quest that also brings rich rewards to the people on earth.

In ARROW TO THE SUN, as in his earlier folktale films, McDermott makes excellent use of appropriate folk designs -- in this case, Acoma Pueblo motifs -- and although his images have the hard-edged look of cutouts they were, in fact, individually silk-screened on to acetate cels.

As the tale unfolds, a black and gold figure with a magical emblem on its torso shoots an arrow, carrying the same emblem, downward through the darkness of space, apparently toward earth. The arrow pierces a Pueblo woman seated meditatively in her adobe. Instantly, the emblem fills the outline of her body and shines like a light. Soon, the woman bears a child.

In a quick succession of images, the child grows into an adolescent. He goes to play with the villagers but his would-be companions reject him. When their fathers come and stand behind the village boys, the "fatherless" boy is ostracized. Dejected, the young man decides he must find his own father.

After saying goodbye to his mother, he crosses the countryside in search of information, encountering a lizard, a farmer, a wild fowl, a potter, and a butterfly. With mime-like gestures and reed accompaniment, the young man "recounts" his story to each; but none can help. Finally, he comes upon an arrow maker. The old man listens pensively then, looking up, envisions a white emblem -- similar to the young man's. Thus divining the young man's parentage, the old man nimbly fashions a special arrow to carry him to the sky kingdom. Once heavenbound, the arrow travels through different levels -- represented by layer upon layer of colored geometric patterns -- until it reaches the sun.

The young man detaches from the arrow and introduces himself to the chief of the place who signals that the young man must undergo four tests, each of which will take place in a special kiva. The young man agrees saying," Father I will endure these tests," and descends the ladder from the roof-entrance of the first kiva. Stylized patterns in the shape of two huge mountain lions leap from the walls and snarl and claw at him. Fearlessly he touches them and they shrink to the size of domestic cats.

In the second kiva, a pair of gigantic snake images spring to life, slithering and rattling their tails. Grasping them firmly, the young man ties them together and they cease to threaten him. In the third kiva, bees swarm menacingly. He gathers up the bees and flings them at the wall where they assume a honeycomb pattern.

After each trial, the boy emerges triumphant. In the fourth kiva, however, the young man encounters the most difficult test of all. Lightning, represented by a flash of white and the sound of bells and drums, flashes violently within the chamber. The boy falls to the ground and does not rise. The music stops. Unable to see what is happening, the sun-god waits outside the kiva. Just when it seems that the young man may have been defeated, he emerges in a dramatic bow of colors, accompanied by a triumphant droning sound. Transformed, he sports a costume of shimmering red and blue with a headdress similar to his father's.

His trials (or rites of passage) completed, father and son join hands. Their union is, however, short-lived. At his father's request, the young man attaches himself to another arrow and returns to earth, bringing with him the sun's energy and power. A cornstalk sprouts from the spot where the arrow lands. Instantly, a corn maiden (symbol of fertility) appears. Her dress bears corn motifs and her hairdo resembles the tassel on an ear of corn. Using gestures and flashback images, the young god tells of his quest. He and the corn maiden dance to lively music, and everyone, (including his mother) joins in a celebratory dance when the couple arrives at the village.

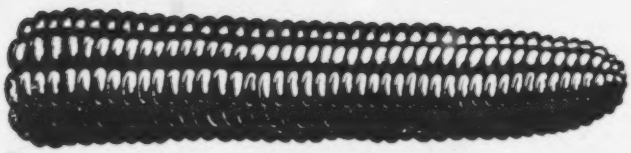
One of McDermott's distinctions as a filmmaker -- in this film particularly, is his effective use of repetition -- not only images and musical motifs, but actions as well. When the boy leaves home, for example, and criss-crosses the countryside looking for information, what he is doing may not be entirely clear to viewers when he first encounters the lizard. After, however, he has talked (depicted as a dance-like interaction) with a farmer, a bird, a potter, and a butterfly, a pattern of action emerges; similar things are happening in all of these encounters and none is particularly helpful. When he encounters the arrow maker, the boy repeats his dance/inquiry; this time, something quite different happens.

Not only are actions repeated and varied, so is the pace. The boy's earlier encounters were evenly paced; his encounter with the arrow maker was paced similarly at first, then it changes tempo as his quest for information is solved and he moves (quite literally) to the next level.

As in the repeated actions on earth, the boy's actions in the heavenly kivas may not, initially, be clear. Viewers may not understand the significance of the big/little cats' or the snakes' transformations but somehow one trusts that it will become clear. When the swarming bees are transformed into a honeycomb -- both of which are easily recognizable symbols even for very young viewers, what he is doing becomes apparent.

Once a pattern has been established, McDermott alters it. In the first three kivas viewers are inside the kiva with the boy; this "position" is changed in the fourth -- viewers are outside, for the last part, with the father. Pacing in the first kivas was evenly rhythmic, almost dance-like; it is slower and more dramatically tense in the fourth. Once the boy is transformed by (and himself transforms) the lightning, he and his father "dance together"; then the boy moves quickly on to the next leg of his journey -- the full-circle return from where he began.

Children of all ages enjoyed ARROW TO THE SUN and responded to its emotional aspects -- particularly when the boy was ostracized from his peer group and when he was undergoing the trials in the kivas. Viewers also obviously delighted in the film's brightly colored images which were choreographed to authentic-sounding music.



In addition to an exquisite use of cinema, McDermott successfully integrates appropriate symbols and authentic, culturally-based motifs so that ARROW TO THE SUN "educates" on many levels. Perhaps because it is so well structured -- and so effectively visual, young viewers were able to recall the film in vivid detail. During an image/sound skim, fourth/fifth graders mentioned "when the corn broke and rotated and showed in front, it was supposed to be the sun" -- an accurate interpretation, and "when he came out of the last court, he came out in a curve of light." As is typical with his films, children described actions in beautiful metaphors -- metaphors that capture precisely what McDermott was trying to convey.

Many children commented on the patterns in the soundtrack -- "the same section of music [was] repeated" -- and the repetition of visual symbols, such as the arrow on which the boy traveled (three times -- if you include the journey prior to birth), the corn motif, and the emblem which appeared on both the boy's and the sun-god's chests.

In discussing the story, children mentioned and debated the identities of the animals and the phenomena that occurred in each kiva. Because of this, ARROW TO THE SUN could be used to introduce animal and object symbolism in Native American cultures -- particularly that of the Acoma Pueblo. If paired with a film such as THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, it could be used to explore such symbols cross-culturally. For a study guide that has very helpful information about its symbolism, contact the film's distributor.

A fine stimulus for dance activities, poetry, storytelling, collage, and designing personal emblems or costumes, ARROW TO THE SUN is wonderful for programs on Native Americans, legends, food, rites of passage, quests, journeys, and animation. We highly recommend this film for children six and older and for family screenings. Although preschool children do not necessarily follow the storyline, many enjoy watching and hearing the film; it works best with this age group if they are familiar with the storyline. Try reading McDermott's companion book in advance of screening the film with very young viewers.

MCC Staff

BAD DOG by Eliot Noyes, Jr. 6 minutes
liveaction/nonverbal USA/1973 (Unifilm)

As two fourth graders commented, appropriate titles for this film could also be "...US THE DOG, because you're supposed to see things the way it does," or "...THE UNKNOWN DOG, because you never get to see the dog." Viewers do, however, see everything that happens through the dog's eyes, the camera. With a witty use of camera angles, position, and movement, filmmaker Noyes makes viewers feel as if they were actually the dog. The upbeat and jazzy rhythm of the soundtrack emphasizes character behavior and makes the visuals even more amusing.

In the opening scene, we "run around" a living room at dog's-eye-level, taking "a sniff" at various objects strewn about the floor. When the front door opens, we "run to greet" the man who enters, jumping up and down on him. He "pats us on the head" and, as he gets ready to go out again, we "fetch his sneaker" helpfully. At the front door, he "puts our leash on" and leads us out of the apartment.

In the next scene, we're in Central Park and snow covers the ground. The man meets a woman who happens to be out walking her dog. With some coaxing from the man, she patronizingly "pats us on the head." He leans over to remove our leash, and we run off for a romp around the park. While on our journey, we encounter some amusing looking people and dogs. In the distance we see the man talking to the woman. As we draw near, we see his unsuccessful attempt to hold her hand. We roam around for a while longer, until we see the woman playing fetch-the-stick with her dog. We decide to participate and pick up a stick, bringing it to the man. He seizes it as an opportunity to impress his new friend. He throws the stick, beckoning us to fetch, but we don't budge. We watch as he picks up another stick and throws it, gesturing for us "to fetch." Unimpressed, the woman looks disdainful and starts to walk away. The man doesn't notice because he is too busy urging us to fetch. Finally, he turns around only to discover that the woman has gone. He looks back at us in an angry, hard stare. Bad dog foiled his plan. He puts our leash on and leads us away.

Back at the apartment for the next scene, the man is watching television. We move towards him but he barely acknowledges our presence and quickly resumes watching the tube as the film ends.

Most children thoroughly enjoyed and understood BAD DOG. They delighted in the images and in discovering the joke of it. Most appreciated the novelty of shooting a film solely from a dog's point of view. They particularly laughed at and remembered the close-up shots and guessed at how those images were filmed.

BAD DOG's familiar subject and simple narrative structure as well as its clever use of camera-as-subject and the consistency of maintaining one point of view make the film easily comprehensible, amusing, and interesting. It is also especially useful for pairing with other, more difficult films. With one fourth-fifth grade class, we screened BAD DOG and followed it with Robert Breer's film, A MAN AND HIS DOG OUT FOR AIR (distributed by the Museum of Modern Art). This animation looks like a series of doodles or, as one fourth grader commented, like "scribbly lines all over the place," until close to the end of the film when the lines transform into "a little fat man and a dog walking." Short (about two minutes long) and difficult, the Breer film makes no sense at all to children without some context. Since children discussed BAD DOG as a film seen "from the dog's eyes," we used their very phrases as an introduction to A MAN AND HIS DOG OUT FOR AIR. We asked them to think about whose "eyes" A MAN AND HIS DOG... was being seen from. This introduction gave them a focus for viewing the second film. We screened these films together as a lead-in to a point of view drawing activity -- an activity that was designed to help children further make sense of the two films.

After the screening, we asked children to pick an animal from whose eyes they were to look at objects in the room, sketching them with a crayon. We suggested using crayons as opposed to pencils so the children could not get too involved in drawing details. BAD DOG helped children grasp the concept of point of view and provided a context within which to view the second film. A MAN AND HIS DOG OUT FOR AIR helped children loosen up so that they were able to draw sketchily without getting hung up on fine details. [Interestingly, with another group we screened the same two films separately. While the group had a similarly positive response to BAD DOG, without the pairing and the scaffolding introduction suggested by BAD DOG, the Breer film seemed pointless to them.]

In another pairing, we screened BAD DOG with ninth and twelfth graders before showing them THE FROG KING... We felt that the camera technique used in the first film would help explain some of the camera work in the second, and we thought this pairing might encourage adolescents to comment on the point of view of different characters, particularly that of the frog. These older groups enjoyed BAD DOG and commented on its humor and novelty, but in their discussions they focused on other aspects of THE FROG KING..., such as characters and relationships (see the review in this issue). Perhaps if our introduction had focused more on point of view, they might have discussed point of view more specifically.

Great for family audiences, BAD DOG can be screened successfully with all peer group audiences aged five and up -- even adults. It can be paired with other films for point of view, humor, nonsense, social commentary, and animal programs. Since its images are imaginative examples of using a camera to see, it could be shown to young filmmakers to inspire new ways of using a camera. Beyond this, it is a fun film -- entertaining for everyone.

B.M.

THE BENT TREE by Sally Heckel 4 minutes
sand animation USA/1980 (Texture Films)

To the sound of gusting wind, title credits appear in thick, green letters. They disappear and the frame quickly darkens. A dual English/Yiddish soundtrack -- girl narrator, male singer -- begins as the shape of a gnarled tree emerges. Dark birds fly from its branches and sunlight brightens a corner of the frame.

> A tree stands by the road
> all bent over.
> All the birds have flown away.
> The tree is left alone before a storm.

Wind stirs up some clouds and pushes against the tree. It bends, transforming suddenly into a woman hunched intently over a sewing machine. A girl, tapping her foot impatiently, stands nearby.

> "Listen, mother, don't try to stop me
> for I am going to become a bird.
> I will sit on the tree and sing it to sleep.
> I will console it all winter long
> with a beautiful melody."

During this stanza, images transform in rapid succession. The girl approaches the camera; her eyes grow so large they fill the screen. They blink. One large eye -- resembling a cat's or owl's eye -- fills the screen momentarily before it stretches horizontally, becoming a silhouette of a bird in flight. This, in turn, becomes a leaf, then a gnarled tree with a bird on its trunk. As the stanza draws to a close, the tree changes again into the woman at her sewing machine. This time, however, the color is a dark red. As the image of the girl reappears on-screen, only the "ta-tum, ta-tum, ta-tum" refrain of the Yiddish song is heard. The girl looks at her mother who, raising her arms in a gesture of futility, transforms into a tree.

> My mother weeps. "No," she says,
> "you could die on me in that tree."
> "Mother, your tears spoil your beautiful eyes.
> Before you know it, I'll become a bird."

The film continues, interweaving Itsik Manger's English/Yiddish lyrics with Sally Heckel's dark sand images -- strong images that resemble woodcuts.

> "Child, my crown,
> for God's sake put on a scarf
> or you'll catch a cold.
> Put on your goulashes. It's a bitter winter!
> And take your fur hat -- woe is me!
> And put on your winter undershirt, you blockhead,
> or you'll be a guest among the dead!"

The woman dresses the child in a red scarf and boots, then in a red hat and undershirt. Dressed in green, the girl flaps her arms like a bird.

> I lift my wings -- it's hard for me.
> My mother has put too many clothes
> on her little bird, her weak one.

Woman and girl regard each other in profile. Their heads merge, becoming a bird which approaches the camera and alights on a branch.

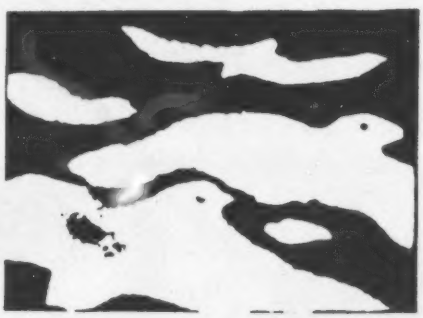
> I look into my mother's eyes.
> She didn't want me to become a bird.
> The tree stands by the road
> all bent over.
> All its birds have flown away.

Changing from a branch, the image of a gnarled tree appears. It stands straight momentarily, then bends. In a reverse of the first visual image, the tree disappears into a mass of blackish-green. As the film ends, darkness gives birth to a white moon and several pale birds. Approaching the camera, one bird undertakes what appears to be a long, solitary journey.

THE BENT TREE's dark, dream-like images create a mood of resigned melancholy that seems quite appropriate for its bittersweet themes of separation and growing up/growing old. Adhering closely to the lines of the poem (which we have transcribed from the soundtrack in their entirety above), the film has a cyclical structure. This circularity is amplified by its frequent repetition of visual motifs -- gnarled tree, woman, sewing machine, birds, eyes, and girl. Its fairly simple structure, however, is enriched by the filmmaking style -- enriched and made complex. The transformational images are somewhat abstracted and thus require a high level of attention -- as does the dual soundtrack which on some levels competes with the visuals for attention. Because of this, the film is best screened two or more times.

From a limited testing with third through sixth graders, we found that only children in the upper age range could discuss and grasp the rich, highly symbolic content of the film. "The bent tree," an astute eleven-year-old observed, "is the mother bent over her sewing machine." Another eleven-year-old conjectured that "the bent tree could be the mother and the birds are the girl; she's leaving home for some reason." However, while older preadolescents recognized that the visual/poetic images had significance beyond their literal meanings, most film viewers had difficulty articulating what that was.

We should point out here that THE BENT TREE was not made especially for children; it is a serious "folkloric" work that we considered worth trying with children.



During our field testing we found that, while the film can work with children if it is carefully handled, it is a difficult and demanding film which may best be used as "a mood piece."

Three aspects in particular seemed to contribute to the film's limited success with young viewers. First, it is a very dense work. The "braiding" of poem, song, and visual images -- though enriching for mature viewers -- posed problems for young viewers. (Some dual vocaltracks do not, however, pose the same problems -- in part, because they do not carry information that is crucial to understanding the film. Dual vocaltracks in works such as Frank Mouris' FRANK FILM and Hilary Harris' ORGANISM are intentionally impressionistic and, although still demanding for young viewers, children can understand the film without hearing and comprehending every word.) If THE BENT TREE is screened only once, it becomes difficult to single out one "strand" to the exclusion of others. In this respect, it is like a dense piece of music; more than one hearing is required. In our testing, when we screened the film twice, children were better able to appreciate it. "This [second] time, it made me feel different -- more comfortable to watch," volunteered one nine-year-old. In using this film with children, we consider more than one screening to be an absolute necessity.

Second, the transformational, sand animated images are extremely demanding. While transformational images are typically difficult for children as well as adults, the images in THE BENT TREE are made more so by their darkness and the rapidity with which they transform. This difficulty can, however, be alleviated to some extent by screening the film more than once.

Third, the film's presentation of theme is sophisticated and metaphoric. While children in their daily lives are familiar with parent/child separation, overprotective parenting, and autonomy conflicts, the format in which these issues are presented in film (or videotape) can determine how accessible they will be to young viewers. In Tom Davenport's folktale film RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL, the theme of parent/child separation was expressed within the context of an elaborated drama. In such a format, children gain access to symbolic material through character development, concrete actions, and meaningful details. Thus, regardless of whether or not they consciously recognize the story's wider implications, children can experience and even understand metaphor in works which use a dramatic narrative format.

THE BENT TREE uses a condensed lyric format. While it does present meaningful details, the situation it portrays is reduced to key images which are isolated from the context of dramatic action. Without experiencing the process of dramatic elaboration, elementary-aged children who are typically very concrete in their thinking have trouble deriving meaning from the film's metaphors.

All of this notwithstanding, THE BENT TREE is a beautiful, sensitively crafted work. Its plaintive voicetracks, dark colors ("like doing death" commented one eleven-year-old), and intimate close-ups evoked a mood which both engaged and moved children. Thus, despite its high degree of difficulty, young viewers approached the film seriously and tried very hard to find connections between its words and visual imagery. After screening the film two times, one group of third/fourth graders wrote the following haiku poems. Not only do they capture the feeling of the film, they also pay tribute to the children's efforts to comprehend it.

The tree bent over.
All of the birds flew away.
And the girl felt sad.

Why is it so bent?
I feel very bad inside.
I wish I could go.

The little girl said,
"There is no way you can stop me
From being a bird."

THE BENT TREE can be used as a stimulus to poetry writing, painting in transformational modes (finger paint, sand, watercolors), and animating songs or poems from the viewers' own cultures. It is also appropriate for programs on Jewish culture, fantasies, transformations, folksongs, women, and women filmmakers. Although it may be too demanding for under-eights outside the context of a family screening we recommend THE BENT TREE for children eight through eleven, if it is carefully programmed, and generally for viewers over eleven. If paired with films such as THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY or THE WHITE HERON (see reviews in this issue) it can be used to explore animal symbolism and the changes people go through as they mature. If paired with RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL, or HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION (see Filmography on page 23), or TALEB AND HIS LAMB (distributed by Barr Films), it can be used to discuss parent/child conflicts.

THE BENT TREE needs an introduction for most viewing groups -- whether children or families. In all-child groups, the film seems to work best when it is introduced as a folksong in which a mother and daughter have a dialogue -- and in which there are two soundtracks; suggest that the one in Yiddish be listened to as if it were only music. The film should then be screened twice with discussion between and after the screenings. We have not yet tested THE BENT TREE with families, but we think it might work very well for that audience -- particularly since parents can explain what is happening as the film proceeds. With family audiences, it would be a good idea to hand out program notes with the transcription of the poem. [Although we did not test it, there is another version of the film without the English translation; it would be most appropriate for audiences that understand Yiddish.]

MCC Staff

A CHAIRY TALE by Norman McLaren 10 minutes
pixillation Canada/1957 (International Film Bureau)

"Once upon a time..." read the titles, then a man holding an open book strolls onto a bare stage. Catching sight of a straight-back chair, he pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and dusts off the seat. He absent-mindedly turns to sit but, just as he is about to do so, the chair seems to leap away. Startled, the man jumps up. Warily, he inspects the chair and tries once more to sit down. As before, the chair leaps away when the man is about to sit. After several attempts to the same end, the man pockets his book, crosses his arms, and suspiciously eyes the white, wooden chair.

So begins A CHAIRY TALE, Norman McLaren's classic mime/parable about reciprocity. On a bare stage against a black background, chair and man (clad entirely in white) perform a pixillated dance which is poignant, witty, and perfectly clear. Nonverbal, except for the opening and closing English subtitles, the film's soundtrack both starts and ends with a rhythmic sitar melody; much of the middle, however, is punctuated by string and percussion which preface, echo, and accentuate the characters' movements. So effectively, in fact, does the music articulate the characters' would-be dialogue, that it seems as if, in the words of one eleven-year-old, "the music speaks for the chair."

Like any ordinary human, the man expects to be able to sit on the chair. This, however, is no ordinary chair! Indeed, with remarkably human gestures, the chair resists the man's every attempt to use it. As the situation develops, it becomes clear that the chair has more "in mind" than simply refusing to be a seat; it wants something in return.

Forced by its bizarre behavior into a novel relationship, the man initially tries stalking the chair. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, he chases after it. For a time, he runs maniacally in circles then pursues it back and forth across the stage. In a classic slapstick comedy routine, the man becomes so engrossed in the chase that he fails to notice that the chair drops out temporarily -- the better to watch the man's frantic efforts. Desperate, the man wrestles with the chair and rides it like a bronco. The chair bucks and throws him to the ground. Exhausted, and apparently ready to give up, the man sits on the floor and begins to read his book.

Deliberately, in what could be called the beginning of act two, the chair approaches the man from off-stage. When he fails to notice it, the chair -- in a complete role-reversal -- bangs its "head" histrionically against the floor. It even lies on its side and "peeks" to see if the man is watching. Since he is still not paying attention, the chair inches right under the man's nose and forces the issue.

Heartened by the chair's interest, the man decides to try a new tack. He tickles the chair and rocks it like a baby. He entertains it -- playing hopscotch, marching, and dancing. Although attentively watching, the chair backs away whenever the man tries to sit down. Finally, with exaggerated formality and comic gesture, the man courts the chair. They tango, dancing gracefully across the stage. But all is for naught, since the chair still refuses to be a proper seat. Exasperated, the man signals "forget it" and stalks off -- making what could be the end of scene one, act two.

The chair yanks him sharply back, pressing the man to plumb the depths of his mind for a solution to their dilemma. With its uncharacteristic behavior, the chair has provoked the man to anger, frustration, and exhaustion. Despite this -- or maybe because of it -- the man has grown fond of the chair (and vice versa) so he makes one final effort. Pacing back and forth, he thinks. Suddenly, he snaps his fingers and beams with recognition. Slowly, quite deliberately, with exaggerated graciousness, the man straightens his back, bends his knees, and assumes the shape of a chair. The chair, delighted, somersaults in mid-air. And, as the man/chair dusts off his lap/seat with a handkerchief, the chair sits down. Satisfied at last, the chair then allows the man to sit on it, "...and they sat happily ever after."

A CHAIRY TALE delighted young viewers from preschool through high school. Even the youngest children enjoyed the joke of a chair's refusing to be sat on. They knew it was patently impossible for a chair to move independently and this seemed to make the situation all the more humorous.

Because the film is nonverbal, visually concrete, emotionally involving, and highly kinetic, it invited the active participation of viewers who interpreted the film aloud to each other. "They're like two magnets; they pop away!" exclaimed one ten-year-old. Occasionally, children talked directly to either the chair or the man: "Come on, he wants you to sit on it," prodded a six-year-old. They labelled actions -- "he's thinking"; "he's crying"; "he's sneaking up [on the man]." They explained character motivation to each other, both during and after the film: "The man was walking back and forth," said one first grader, "he was thinking how to make himself a chair."

Not only is the dramatic situation impeccably structured, but the mimed action is so clear that even first graders noted the many physical allusions -- rocking, crying, playing hopscotch, and riding a bronco, to name a few. It's simplicity seemed to help young children grasp the "trade" between man and chair. While younger viewers particularly enjoyed discussing this compromise, fifth and sixth graders were most curious about how the chair was made to move.

When MCC staff field tested A CHAIRY TALE, it worked very successfully without an introduction -- except our usual preface to films of this type, "It's a black and white film and there are no words." -- along with the invitation, "Why don't you tell the story aloud as you watch."

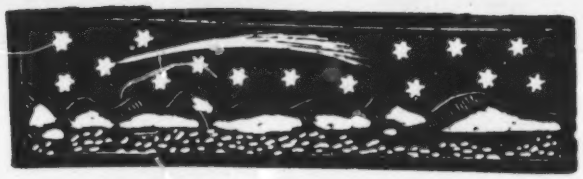
At several test sites, we screened A CHAIRY TALE with THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY. They make an interesting combination because, among other things, both are about reciprocity, point of view, and conflict. Both have strong storylines and strong kinesthetic impact, but they contrast nicely in tone and technique. Given these qualities, and the fact that viewers were captivated by the movement of A CHAIRY TALE and the realism/immediacy of THE FROG KING, the pair makes a wonderful lead-in to mime, creative dramatics, and point of view activities.

Unlike McLaren's other parable, NEIGHBORS, which (with its extreme violence -- even infanticide) is incomprehensible as well as disturbing to young children, A CHAIRY TALE is perfectly appropriate for all aged viewers. We highly recommend it for use with small or large groups, including family audiences. It would work well in programs on dance, mime, friendship, cooperation, humor, nonsense, tall tales, parables, problem solving, role-reversal, conflict, and point of view. In addition to being a stimulus for movement, storytelling, or puppetry, this well-crafted pixillation would be excellent for filmmaking activities.

M.L.F.

THE CREATION by Joan Gratz 9 minutes
clay animation USA/1981 (Billy Budd Films)

A vibrant, visually exciting version of the Genesis story, CREATION looks like a clay painting. Animated by Joan Gratz in thick clay impasto, the film's images move between abstraction and concrete shapes, becoming recognizable for moments before dissolving into other forms. These transformational images are subtley synchronized with the narration, a Black spiritual poem from God's Trombones by James Weldon Johnson, which is delivered by James Earl Jones in the rhythm and cadence of old-time preachers. In cycles of motion/stillness, sound/silence, crescendo/decrescendo, the film seems to pulsate with energy.



As the film begins, the screen is entirely black. A resonant voice says, "And God stepped out on space and he looked around and said, 'I'm lonely. I'll make me a world.'" Then, from the blackness, gray-white swirls coalesce into an eye form while, on the soundtrack, a bass hum grows louder. "As far as the eye of God could see, darkness covered everything." The eye grows large and dissolves into blackness. Brilliant white streaks move dramatically out from the center of the screen and the bass is replaced by the crescendo of violins. Suddenly, a joyous rhythm erupts. Bells, bongos, cymbals, thumb piano, synthesizer, and various African instruments begin a jazz dance as the narrator explains how God formed the sun from the light and then, gathering up the extra light, flung it into space to make the stars. All the while, a thick impasto of earth colors spirals out from center screen, becoming a hand which molds and holds a yellow ball suspended in the darkness. Two hands then gather white and hurl it against the dark where it splinters into "stars." Once again the narrator tells how God said, "That's good"--then the narrator pauses. Music and motion also cease.

Next, we are told, God formed the earth. We hear his footstep and see a great upheaval of mountains and valleys in yellow, brown, ochre, and blue. "When God stepped over the edge of the earth, he spat out the seven seas and batted his eyes and the lightnings flashed. He clapped his hands and the thunders rolled." Shades of blue tumble across the screen. Blacks and grays mix in a powerful deluge which forms vertical stripes -- "...the waters of the earth came down. The cooling waters came down."

A quick succession of pointillistic images appear -- grass, flowers, trees, lakes, rivers, and a rainbow. A luminescent hand signals as the narrator says, "Bring forth! Bring forth!" A pale blue pool transforms into fish, beasts, birds, butterflies, then a cat appears, along with a peacock, zebra, horse, and a tableau of wild animals (reminiscent of Hick's "A Peaceable Kingdom"). The music ceases. All movement stops, and once again we hear that God said, "That's good." This time, however, the narrator adds that God looked around the world and found that he was lonely still.

Sitting down, an anthropomorphic God ponders his loneliness. With chin in hand (reminiscent of Rodin's "The Thinker"), God changes position several times before arriving at a solution. "I'll make me a man." Scooping clay from a river, God kneels and forms a human shape. His "man" reclines with arm extended (like Adam in Michaelangelo's fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel). Then, facing the camera, the face of "man" becomes a succession of different faces -- people of all races and ages -- which transform in sync to the guitar/percussion score. As before, sound and motion stop, momentarily, to mark the end of this section before the next begins. When God breathes into "man" a young Black male comes to life -- he jumps up, turning and dancing -- and the narrator says, "Man became a living soul." A brilliant, yellowish light appears in the dark blue sky. "Amen," says the narrator, and with one last resounding "Amen!" the film ends.

It should be noted that this film represents a significant departure from past Will Vinton studio productions. Not only is the Plasticene or clay in CREATION a two-dimensional impasto -- as opposed to three-dimensional puppets, the animation technique does not overwhelm the storyline as it did, for example, in RIP VAN WINKLE (see Film Review Supplement, Volume 1, Number 1; Fall 1979). CREATION has perhaps the best marriage of technique and subject of all the Vinton studio productions to date.

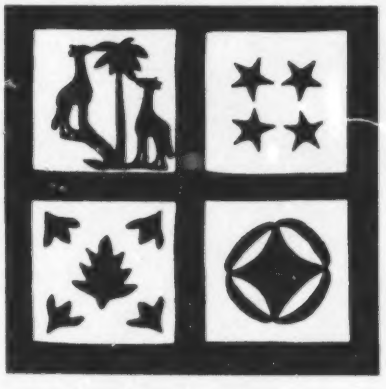
Excited by the transformations of color and form -- as well as Jones' wonderful voice which some recognized immediately as the voice of Darth Vader -- most groups of children aged eight to eleven got right into the film. Others seemed able to hook into the film only when, as animals appeared, the film's imagery became more concrete and familiar. Not surprisingly, since it is difficult to remember specific transformational images after just one viewing, youngsters most often mentioned familiar images (sun, rainbow, animals) during the image/sound skim. However, children invariably commented on the image of God thinking -- "trying to figure out how to make a person" -- and the image of "man" changing into many different people. There was, in fact, an awed hush during this particular section. Perhaps it held special significance because, as one ten-year-old explained appreciatively, it "showed all kinds of people -- old, young, White, Black."

MCC staff felt that some of the faces in this section were female -- but it was hard to tell. Some children, however, said, "Why didn't they make Eve?" and "God also made the sun and the earth and he also made woman." When, in response to the last comment, the evaluator asked children why they thought there were no women, several youngsters agreed that it was because God wanted to make a person in his own image, and God was clearly male. One boy, however, thought that Eve was not shown because Adam came first. Although the lack of female images could be seen as a problem, we feel that the film's excellence in every other area -- structure, presentation, tone, and content -- far outweighs this drawback. Since Eve is included in the original Genesis account, a comparison of Bible, poem, and film versions could be a wonderful lead-in to considering how and why storytellers choose to tell their stories the way they do; in this regard it could parallel imprinting activities for THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY.

CREATION does not require an introduction; however, since we found that many children were not familiar with the Genesis account of creation, it might enhance their enjoyment and appreciation of the film to read a version of the Bible story, or Johnson's poem from God's Trombone before screening the film. It might also be interesting to tell a creation myth from another culture and talk briefly about the variety of explanations for the origin of the world. Similarly, CREATION could be paired with other origins tales -- such as the film, THE CREATION OF BIRDS, a MicMac legend.

Second through fifth graders thoroughly enjoyed this film, and, although we have not yet tested it with youngsters over eleven, we think it would work very well for young adults -- and adults, too. The film would also be ideal for family audiences, despite its difficult transformational images, because parents can explain and discuss "what's happening" with very young children as the film is screened. Excellent for programs about religion, myths, creation or origins tales, and beginnings, CREATION would make a wonderful stimulus for storytelling, Plasticene or clay sculpture, impasto painting, reciting, or poetry writing -- particularly a highly structured form, such as haiku, which can provide a helpful contrast to the film's transformational images.

M.L.F.



THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY
by Tom Davenport 15 minutes liveaction
USA/1980 (Davenport Films)

Structured like a play in three acts with an epilogue, THE FROG KING... opens on a long shot of a forest. In the distance, a girl skips into the frame. She zigzags between the trees, approaching the camera, and (over "natural" forest sounds) a male narrator recounts the familiar lines that begin the Grimm folktale. Near a large tree the girl loses her golden ball in a well and begins to cry. A talking frog promises to retrieve it if he can sit at her table and sleep in her bed. The girl agrees but once the frog has returned her ball she runs off, leaving him struggling to climb out of the well. In a reverse of the opening shot, the camera "watches" the girl moving off into the distance.

A Viennese waltz (the first introduction of music) is heard as the facade of a nineteenth-century mansion fills the frame. Music increases in volume and the camera, moving like a visitor/voyeur inside the building, pauses on three musicians. We have entered a hall where the girl is dining with family and friends. Suddenly, there is a loud knock which the girl answers only to find a wet-looking frog at the door. She slams it shut, the music stops, and everyone stares as she returns stiffly to the table. Gently mocking at first, her father asks who was at the door. He learns of her promise and insists that she allow the frog in. After some protest, she does. With a thwapping sound that contrasts with the embarrassed silence in the room, the frog hops to the table. Musicians resume playing and a Black butler, observing the father's request, places three red pillows on a chair beside the girl and sets the frog there. In comic counterpoint to the formal setting, the frog sits momentarily on the pillows before leaping into the girl's soup bowl and, from there, all around the table. When the frog announces that he is ready to go to bed, her father insists the girl take him to her room. Again she protests. Again her father insists and she exits, disgustedly carrying the frog up a wooden staircase.

Music continues, an audible reminder of the dinner party below, when the girl enters her room; it stops when she shuts the door. Depositing the frog on a dresser, the girl wipes her hands, prepares selfconsciously for sleep, and hurries to the safety of her bed. Immediately, the frog leaps to the floor and demands to be taken into bed. When the girl refuses, he threatens to tell her father. At that, she grabs the frog and hurls him against the door. To her amazement, a young man hits the floor where the frog should have fallen. They stare at each other momentarily, then she goes to his aid. As they talk quietly, a voiceover narration explains that the girl broke the spell which turned him into a frog and, at her father's wish, the young man becomes the girl's husband.

In a short epilogue, a horse-drawn vehicle moves down a dirt road while music continues from the end of the previous scene. Music stops when the narrator says that the young man heard a sound which was the breaking of bands around the heart of his servant, Faithful Henry. Turn-of-the-century music resumes as the carriage recedes into the distance and the film ends.

Through a masterful use of music and silence or effects, camera angles and distance, actor's gestures, and carefully selected details -- including period costumes, THE FROG KING... creates an environment that provoked the following exchange with one group of fourth/fifth graders:

Evaluator:	"You usually talk more during films; why were you so quiet during this one?"
First Child:	"It was perfect!"
Second Child:	"I like the way he puts fairy-tales into a story that's so real; he doesn't use cartoons. It's nice that it's real people.

As in his other folktales, Davenport transferred the setting of his liveaction film to America and still preserved the essence of the Grimm story upon which it was based. This film, however, marks an interesting departure from his earlier works. In both HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION and RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL, Davenport used parts to suggest wholes and kept details of setting to a minimum. In THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, however, he expands somewhat on the story, adding characters (musicians, servants, dinner guests -- although he does not give them lines of dialogue) and details, such as the big game trophies on the wall of the dining room (which contrast markedly with the small frog). In addition, he employs a more complex and formal filmmaking style -- there are clear demarcations between scenes (or acts), more reaction and point of view shots, and, for the first time, comic relief.

Because we were preparing the user's guide which comprises the body of this issue of Young Viewers, we tested THE FROG KING... with a wider than usual audience, from preschool through high school viewers. Not surprisingly, responses followed age-related patterns.

Preschool through fourth grade children loved the film. They maintained a running chatter during screenings, for the most part anticipating actions and commenting on details of the film, but they quieted noticeably at the height of each scene's conflict. Character behavior was a favorite topic of discussion for these under-tens. Their sentiments, typically consistent within each viewing group, were either with the frog or with the princess. While none professed great love for him, viewers often sympathized with the frog because they saw the princess as "spoiled and mean" for "cheating the frog." In contrast to this response, both a first grade and a second/third grade were disgusted by the frog; they felt the princess was justified in her negative response. After the frog leaped all over the table, one of the first graders said, "That's why she shouldn't have let him in; he causes too much trouble." She didn't want to keep him because he was annoying," an eight-year-old explained," he kept jumping around and saying [sic] things like, 'You heard me!'" Except for a gifted fourth grade which saw him as "strict" and "grouchy," most groups considered the father to be an honest man who wanted the princess "to learn to keep her promises." Faithful Henry, however, held little interest for under-tens, perhaps due to his inactivity as a character; children either ignored him or dismissed him with comments such as, "There are no Faithful Henrys with bands around their hearts."

The moral question involved in making a promise was the second major concern for under-tens. Many believed that the story was meant "to teach you to keep your promises" and they were critical of the princess' actions. One group of fourth grade boys had a particularly earnest conversation among themselves about promises after seeing the film. Another group -- second/third graders -- talked intently about consciences: "Didn't the princess have a guilty conscience [for breaking her promise]?" This same group went on to discuss the role adults play in helping children with their consciences until -- like the princess -- they are old enough to accept responsibility for themselves. As these examples illustrate, children went beyond the surface of the story to explore personally relevant issues in THE FROG KING...

Under-tens appreciated the film's liveaction treatment and its high production values -- commenting, as they have in response to Davenport's HANSEL AND GRETEL, that the film "was like a real movie." However, realism per se only became a focus of discussion for older groups.

Fifth and sixth graders were also responsive to the film's treatment -- as summed up by one who said: "I like the way he puts fairytales into a story that is so real -- he doesn't use cartoons." They liked "the frog's new voice" when he became a prince because it made him seem like an ordinary person. And they responded favorably to the film's casting: "I like the way he [Davenport] chose his characters; they go real well, observed an eleven-year-old; "The princess in the movie fit the princess in the fairytale -- I know the fairytale." Other details, such as having musicians play instruments on-screen, were noted by children this age as things that made "the story more real" and thus more convincing.

In marked contrast to these responses by younger children, seventh/eighth graders criticized THE FROG KING... for being "unreal." Although they seemed engrossed while watching, after the screening they characterized the film as "unbelievable," pointing out that frogs could neither talk nor knock on doors. Some also found the father less than believable; in their view, no parent would talk to or make his daughter keep her promise to a frog.

[Thirteen and fourteen-year-olds had the greatest difficulty suspending their disbelief, a situation Arthur Applebee discusses in The Child's Concept of Story (University of Chicago, 1978). Applebee maintains that with the onset of adolescence young people begin to understand that works of art offer one of many possible world views. This awareness, Applebee says, is often accompanied by a "...rejection of fantasy similar to that of younger children when they discover that some works are not 'true'; the early adolescent often rejects works which are not realistic presentations of the world as he or she sees it." It is only after this new perspective is mastered, Applebee continues, that adolescents can accept "...the conventions of fantasy and the possibilities inherent in alternative views of the world" (page 133). In line with his observation, older high school viewers were much less critical of this aspect of the film than thirteen/fourteen-year-olds.]

Despite different groups' debates about the film's realism, children from fifth to eighth grades had a well-rounded view of the film's characters. "He [the frog] shouldn't have ruined the king's party," one eleven-year-old observed, "but her [the princess'] behavior was not good either." Eleven to fourteen-year-olds discussed character motivation with a sophisticated sense of social awareness and fairness: "I don't know if I would have broken my promise [to the frog];" said one fourteen-year-old, "I can identify with her feelings, but I wouldn't have done that." While some in this age group accepted that good things can happen unexpectedly, others had difficulty with the idea that nice things can happen to someone as undeserving, in their eyes, as the princess. They reconciled those feelings to some degree by rationalizing that the frog provoked the princess purposely so that, in throwing him, she would break his spell. "It's sort of like she was using him to get the ball," concluded one twelve-year-old; "In another way, the frog was using her to throw him to become a prince."

Early adolescents were particularly sensitive to gestures and facial expressions, those subtle communications of emotion and character motivation. "The father was acting [when he referred to the giant at the door], but the frog was talking and out of the corner of his eye the father looked at her. He didn't believe her at first -- then he looked ashamed at her for not letting the frog in."

Of all the viewing groups, ninth to twelfth graders were best able to articulate the significance of THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY and to discover subtle meaning in it. In commenting on the frog's metamorphosis, for example, one sixteen-year-old observed that the prince was less demanding and less obnoxious than the frog had been -- "[he was] more relaxed with his own self; you could tell from the sound of his voice." Older high school viewers noted the film's sexual symbolism but were reluctant, somewhat understandably, to discuss this directly. Sexuality, however, is a "charged" topic and ignoring it left an undercurrent of feelings which, in our testing, inhibited further discussion. We found that the image/feeling skim (see the Ninth to Twelfth Grade section of the guide) offered a useful, structured outlet for those feelings and paved the way for further discussion about other issues.

In addition to considering the wider meaning and symbolism of the film, high school viewers mentioned formal elements, such as presentation and structural consistency. They talked, for instance, about the switch from an active to a narrative presentation at the end of the third scene, and -- unlike younger viewers -- they debated the appropriateness of the frog's voice which, for them, seemed to break the film's illusion of reality.

In general, adolescents responded favorably to THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, especially when we introduced it with some background on folklore and imprinting. Such pre-screening discussions helped set a convincingly serious, mature framework for viewing the film. They also counteracted the not atypical response that "folktales are for kids."

THE FROG KING... can be used with a great many activities -- from storytelling to research about animal symbols, activities which are detailed in this issue of Young Viewers. The film is also wonderful for family audiences.

MCC Staff

image/sound skim

What follows are excerpts from our evaluation forms for THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY. The first question, phrased somewhat differently with different groups, is what we call the image/sound skim. (Age/grade level of viewers is indicated before the image/sound skim.) The second question, which we also asked during testing, is about the film's characters. In one instance, we have included the spontaneous comments children made during the screening.

FIRST GRADE, Barnard School in Washington Heights

Close your eyes for a minute and think about the film. What images or sounds do you remember from the film?

When she throws the ball in the water;
it dropped and the frog picked it up.
When she threw the frog against the door,
it turned into a prince.
When the girl put the frog in her room.
When the frog jumped in the soup.
When the frog came to the house --
the father told her to open the door.
When the frog jumped in the soup.
When the frog was on the chair next to the girl.

Who do you think is the main character in the film?

The frog. *Why?* 'Cause he's a prince.
It was the witch who turned him into a frog.
The girl, 'cause she didn't want to open the door
or let the frog in the bedroom.
The girl, because she throwed the frog.
The father, because he said to open the door.
[The father] because he told her to go to her room.

FOURTH GRADE, P.S. 124 in Chinatown

What images or sounds do you remember from the film?

When the frog jumped around the dinner table
and croaked.
When the frog said, "Bring me to your room."
The princess throwing the frog against the door.
The father saying she should do everything
she promised.
When they were talking at the table and [her father]
asked the princess if there was a giant at the door.
Yeah, it made the story seem more modern
and not just a story.
The frog knocking at the door.
When the frog brought back the ball in its mouth.

How did you feel about the characters?

I thought the princess was a chicken.
The princess wasn't like a princess --
she was sort of mean -- not like other stories.
I liked the father. He was honest.
Yeah, I liked the father because he was good --
but not stuffy like the book.
I mean he was more modern.

FIFTH GRADE, P.S. 124 in Chinatown

Spontaneous observations made while watching the film.

I want to see how the frog is done.
Crayfish, oooh!
Kermit the frog.
Trained frog?
Did she step on it?
Icky girls [referring to the girl's sisters]
"I'm not hungry anymore."
[A paraphrase of what the frog says.]
No manners!
Ugly frog.

What images or sounds do you remember from the film?

When the girl threw the frog,
you could hear the frog hit the door.
The frog jumping into everyone's soup -- it was gross!
How the frog tried to jump out of the well.
When the frog knocked down the wine glass;
it was funny how the priest drank his quickly.
The musicians. They were different from other stories--
not like a castle.
The crayfish the girl pulled out of the well
[when she was initially trying to retrieve the ball];
it was awful.
How the butler tried to catch the frog.
The frog knocking on the door.
The violins [sic] -- it made the story more real.
When the frog changed into a prince;
it was neat the way he appeared.
Yeah, that was done different
from what other movies show.

How did you feel about the characters?

I thought it was more realistic
[than Lotte Reiniger's THE FROG PRINCE with
which Davenport's fim was paired.]
The faces and colors made it more real
[than in Reiniger's film].
Wasn't that a real frog and they used ventriloquism?
No, dummy! It was a model.
I liked the king in the first film [Reiniger's THE FROG
PRINCE]; he seemed like a king -- more like other
stories. This one was different -- not like a king.

THE FROG PRINCE by Lotte Reiniger 11 minutes
b&w/silhouette animation Great Britain/1955 (Texture)

Delicately cut black silhouettes are superimposed on gray and white backgrounds in Lotte Reiniger's fairytale in which figures move, as if behind a scrim, with the precise and exaggerated articulation of marionettes. Accompanied by an emphatic musical score, a male narrator introduces the tale:

> "Once there lived a king and this king was given a wonderful golden ball. It was said of the ball that it would one day lead one of the princesses to a royal marriage. So the king called in his three daughters to see which of them could catch the ball."

From the cameo of a castle exterior, the scene changes to the interior of a sixteenth-century Baroque hall where a rotund king sits (in profile -- as all human characters appear) on a finely wrought throne. Dressed in a costume suggestive of that era -- tights and a short tunic with high collar and lacy cuffs -- the king wears a diminutive crown on his over-large head. When he throws the ball, his two eldest daughters (a tall thin woman with a crown and a short fat woman with a crown) drop it, but the youngest daughter (a well-proportioned young woman with a crown) catches it and takes the ball outside.

In a relatively long simulated pan, the youngest princess walks through a garden with topiary and statuary reminiscent of royal French and English gardens. The princess walks, while tossing and catching the ball, until she comes to a weeping willow, whereupon she drops it into a well beneath the tree.

The ball sinks slowly to the bottom of the well, while the princess sits weeping above. A frog wearing a crown sees the ball descend through the shimmering water. Rising to the surface, he offers to help the princess. The narrator, who in storyteller's fashion speaks for the frog and the king (but not the princess), says, "I will bring you back your ball if you will promise to be my friend and let me eat with you and play with you." The princess agrees but, once she has the ball, runs off with the frog following close behind.

The princess joins her father and sisters for dinner in the palace. All spoon their soup in unison until a knock interrupts their meal. The manservant, finding a frog at the garden door, informs the king who then learns what transpired at the well. "A promise is a promise," declares the king; "the frog must come in." The servant opens the door and the frog enters. As he nears the table, however, the three princesses climb up on their chairs.

"A promise is a promise," repeats the king (as a "medium close-up" cuts the table in half and temporarily eliminates the youngest princess from view). "A friend," he says, "should sit at the table." Without any further hesitation, the princess proceeds to feed the frog (in another "medium close-up") as he sits upon the table. After that, the frog juggles a fork while balancing on the ball. This, the narrator explains, delights the king but infuriates the princess who runs to her room. Saddened by the turn of events, the frog follows the princess upstairs, carrying the ball in hopes it will cheer her. At the entrance to her room, the princess accepts the ball and shuts the door.

With tears spilling from his eyes, the frog pleads to be admitted. Apparently moved, the princess lets him enter her room and they play catch -- she on the bed and he on the floor, until the frog leaps impulsively to the bed. At once, the princess tosses him to the floor where he turns into a prince clad in "Elizabethan era" clothing. He casually resumes playing catch before taking the princess' hand and, as the narrator explains, asking her to marry him. As they leave the bedroom, the princess drops the ball which bounces elaborately down the stairs to where the king is waiting. The young couple announce their marriage and the film ends with a narrative coda:

> "The king was delighted and very pleased to find it was true about the golden ball. It had indeed led his youngest daughter to a royal marriage."

Reiniger's silhouettes have contours of remarkable intricacy and elegance and strongly resemble tapestries. A tour de force, in terms of animation technique, these "shadow puppet plays" have a wide and popular appeal. Despite this, the images posed serious problems for some children under nine. "I couldn't really understand what they were doing," commented an eight-year-old; "when it's shadows it makes it hard to see."

Reiniger's elaborate images, in which baroque silhouette "borders" -- i.e., trees, grass, and furnishings which support or surround her characters -- compete visually with her silhouette characters, seemed to create, at least for very young viewers, problems in separating characters from their environment. When coupled with her use of non-stop music and a storyteller's narrative -- both of which blend things together instead of separating and distinguishing aspects, it is easy to see how some children might have difficulty in understanding what was going on in THE FROG PRINCE.

One aspect of the silhouette technique which many children commented on was the lack of facial detail and facial expression. "This film bothers me," said a ten-year-old, "because I can't see them [the characters' faces] while they talk; it's eerie." Although children typically discuss lack of faces in films with such images (see the review of SUN FLIGHT in the Winter 1980 Film Review Supplement, V.1:2), they seemed particularly bothered by this "abstraction" in THE FROG PRINCE. Two factors may account for this response. One is that Reiniger's figures are very life-like in many other respects, so viewers may have expected more life-like treatment of faces. The other may be the general level of characterization, which is quite formal and, thus, depersonalizes the characters.

In an interesting contrast to Reiniger, Gerald McDermott (who created ARROW TO THE SUN which is reviewed in this issue) infuses abstract, silhouette-like images with an emotional vitality through the use of color and the frugal selection of detail. He simplifies, focusing on character and dramatic action, and thus personalizes his tales.

Reiniger, on the other hand, embroiders the stories she selects, elaborating non-essential details and movement for its own sake, creating thereby what could best be called tableaux or pageants. Most effective in pageant-tales such as THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM (a delightful version of the Christmas story designed by Reiniger and distributed by Richard Kaplan Productions in New York), the technique seemed to work against viewer involvement in THE FROG PRINCE. When asked, for example, how the film made them feel, a fifth grader said, "Nothing, it was just a story."

THE FROG PRINCE was not entirely without emotion, however, and it is noteworthy that in our testing every viewing group mentioned the one scene where Reiniger allows a character to visibly express some emotion, that is, when the frog cries.

Reiniger is obviously not interested in exploring or in revealing character in her works. Because of this, and the fact that characters do not speak in their own voices, children had little to say about the characters in THE FROG PRINCE. We found it significant that the princess never had a line of dialogue (although, given the fact that the narrator was male, this might have been awkward); unlike the king and the frog, who have actual "lines," her words are incorporated into the narrative. This not only minimized her impact as a character, it helped reduce her to the stereotype of a passive, obedient daughter who does not talk back to her father. Reiniger has, moreover, made her sufficiently "quainty" that, upon seeing the frog in her dining room, she climbs up on a chair.

To our surprise, since it is not a topic they usually initiate, children during testing spontaneously alluded to stereotypes in relation to THE FROG PRINCE. As the prince and princess left the bedroom together, one eight-year-old said, "Princes are always taller than princesses." A classmate noted that "In all fairytales, they live happily ever after."

While some children responded quite favorably to the film, many said it was unexciting. In our analysis, Reiniger's treatment of the story worked against viewer involvement. By means of the narrative introduction and the frog's crown, she signals -- perhaps too clearly -- what will happen, thus reducing the level of suspense and leaving little for children to anticipate or discover. Hand in glove with this, she sweetens the story, stripping it of conflict and dramatic tension, thus reducing its vitality.

When her treatment of story -- a treatment which lacks conflict, suspense, and tension, is combined with her abstracted images, the meaning of the tale is considerably altered. The frog loses symbolic import and the ball becomes the focus of the tale. Not insignificantly, marriage plays a large role in the story. Reiniger's film, unlike the Grimm story, is not about growing up, coming of age, or rites of passage; it is, instead, a tale of magic and is closer to those based on the archetype of magic objects -- from magic rings to Aladdin's magic lamp.

It is interesting to compare Reiniger's THE FROG PRINCE with Davenport's THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY (which is reviewed in this issue). Although they are based on the same source material, each artist has interpreted (or imprinted) the tale quite differently and, in so doing, evokes markedly different responses from viewers. Davenport's film, by and large, creates a liveaction environment that is as large and compelling as life. Reiniger, in contrast, has created a miniature world of delicate forms which "contains" the story and creates a distance between viewers and characters -- something certain users may prefer.

The two films can be compared on other levels as well. Davenport clearly asks viewers to suspend their disbelief of the story and to empathize with the film's characters. Reiniger asks viewers to enjoy the delicate fabric of the story, but she never asks them to suspend their disbelief -- in fact, she makes it quite clear through details such as having the frog wear a crown that this is only a story.

Although we did not do it for every screening of THE FROG PRINCE, we paired Reiniger's film in some testings with Davenport's THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, alternating the order in the interest of fairness. As their spontaneous comparison below indicates, seven/eight-year-olds were very clear about what they liked or disliked in each film. Because of this, we quote their discussion in toto.

First Child: "I wouldn't have wanted to marry the prince in THE FROG KING... -- not if he embarrassed me that much. THE FROG PRINCE was better. It didn't have real people. It was prettier, less real, like silhouettes. In THE FROG KING... it was real people -- but not real; that ruined it."

Second Child: "I liked THE FROG KING... because in THE FROG PRINCE they did too much, too fast, and they didn't talk."

Third Child: "In THE FROG PRINCE you couldn't see their faces."

Fourth Child: "In THE FROG PRINCE the people were ugly."

Fifth Child: "I liked THE FROG PRINCE because THE FROG KING... didn't tell how the princess got the ball."

First Child: "THE FROG PRINCE was weird because the frog and the princess didn't talk -- the princess never talked!"

Sixth Child: "I think THE FROG PRINCE was kind of old because the writing looked old and it was black and white."

In another comparison screening, fourth graders made the following comments:

First Child: "I liked THE FROG KING... better because the frog was real. It was more interesting to watch a real frog talk and jump around than this [silhouette] frog. He was too much a paper frog -- I couldn't see the frog."

Second Child: "There is one thing I liked in THE FROG PRINCE -- when the frog cried tears. I liked that -- that was neat!"

Third Child: "I wanted to see the faces of the people in THE FROG PRINCE."

Fourth Child: "THE FROG KING... was more true to the book I read."

Fifth Child: "I liked the colors of THE FROG KING..."

Sixth Child: "THE FROG KING... was more exciting."

Despite any apparent similarities, THE FROG PRINCE and THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY are so different in content and impact that they require vastly different uses.

While each can be programmed quite successfully, THE FROG KING... can be used to stimulate activities about folklore, point of view, animal symbols, and dramatic improvisation. THE FROG PRINCE works best as a stimulus to activities related to collage, shadow puppets, and cutout animation.

THE FROG PRINCE is also appropriate for programs on the history of animation; Reiniger is a pioneering animator who produced her first silhouette films in Germany during the nineteen-twenties. She migrated to England during the Nazi regime and has continued to produce this type of animation for over sixty years. THE FROG PRINCE can be best appreciated by children between the ages of seven and eleven, particularly if they are told beforehand that the film is black and white and looks a lot like a shadow puppet play. Naturally, the film is fine for family programs.

MCC Staff

LEGEND by Ritchard Raxlen 15 minutes liveaction
Canada/1970 (National Film Board of Canada)

"What answers when you call it, but cannot speak?" In this Native American tale, filmmaker Raxlen makes excellent use of the above riddle in order to probe the nature of beauty and the mysteries of human relationships. The film is actually a video solarization, a technique which -- by abstracting images into luminescent forms -- obliterates physical details. The technique thus requires viewers to imagine, or flesh out, the appearance of the characters. Solarization, in addition, limits the film's palette to blue, gray, pink, red, and green. This, together with its eerie electronic music track, gives LEGEND an enigmatic, haunting mood.

The film opens on the silhouette of a tall, blue and white tree. A young man leans against the tree with his back to the camera. Hesitantly, he approaches a young woman who combs her long hair in the sunlight. The man compliments her and announces that he has scrubbed his face with cedar as she bade him. Without actually regarding him, the vain woman upbraids the man: "You're still ugly. Go back to the river. This time, scrub with spruce. Then, if you love me come back again." The young man does her bidding but when he returns, she coyly sets him yet another, more painful trial: "Go find the wild rose and scrub with thorns." Without resistance, the young man sets off through a field. As he does, the film becomes more dreamlike. The image of an elf-like person dances in the field and speaks to him, telling of a mysterious spirit woman ("sister to the sphinx") who can change faces. The young man runs through the woods to find the spirit woman. On entering her doorway, his face turns a pinkish hue. The woman who greets him is almost invisible except for masklike blue and white lines across her face. She promises to help him if he can answer the riddle, "What answers when you call it but cannot speak?" The young man replies, "Your heart can't speak, but it answers when you call." Satisfied, the spirit woman waves her hands and transforms his face. Simultaneously, the color scheme of the film reverses as if a negative was converted into a photograph, and for the first and only time in the film, the handsome young man's face is clearly visible. He smiles and departs in a blur of pink and green trees.

While he travels, ominous sounds are heard. A growling bear emerges from the woods and lunges at the young man. They wrestle on the ground and within moments the bear is dead. In a transformation reminiscent of a Jekyll and Hyde movie, the bear changes into a lovely young woman who, realizing she is free from an evil spell, gratefully offers to serve the young man. But he prefers to marry her, and they return to the young man's friends.

The vain woman, his first love, struts haughtily out of the forest. Jealously she eyes the man and his new love. She can hardly believe what has happened. Furious, she demands directions to the spirit woman, for she wants to become even more beautiful. Despite his efforts to dissuade her, she persists until the young man gives her directions.

From behind, the camera follows the woman urgently running through the forest. To a crescendo of drums, she reaches the spirit woman's house and bursts in the door. The spirit woman repeats the riddle -- "What answers when you call it but cannot speak?" -- and agrees to help if the young woman can answer it. "An animal, like a dog," says the vain woman impulsively: "A dog." After a brief and enigmatic exchange, the spirit woman waves her hands and recedes into the background. Standing with her back to the camera, the vain woman puts her hands to her face. As she does so, the light blue of her head brightens and she emits an icy scream. The spirit woman has given her a new face, but not the one she wished for. Without ever showing her face, the young woman runs screaming into the woods, bathed in red light, her anger and fright underscored by the eerie shrieks of a recorder.

> "It was blurry, you couldn't even see."
>
> "[The filmmaker] wanted you to see inner selves -- the physical self is not important, so it didn't matter if it was so blurry."

As these comments by eighth/ninth graders illustrate, the solarization stimulated divergent ideas and opinions and presented a wealth of images and metaphors for viewers to consider. Fifth through ninth graders debated the function and effectiveness of the solarization and shared astute observations about things, such as the changes in color and light, the use of a limited palette, and the film's eerie soundtrack. In analyzing and discussing film content (what they saw and heard), children arrived at an understanding of the film's themes.

Appreciation of the technique and plot seemed to relate directly to how ready and willing viewers were to suspend their disbelief and deal with the film on a symbolic, rather than a literal, level. Some children, for instance, were skeptical about how quickly the young man and bear/woman decided to marry; other children seemed to understand their "engagement" as an abbreviated way of showing more of the man's personality and moving the story along.

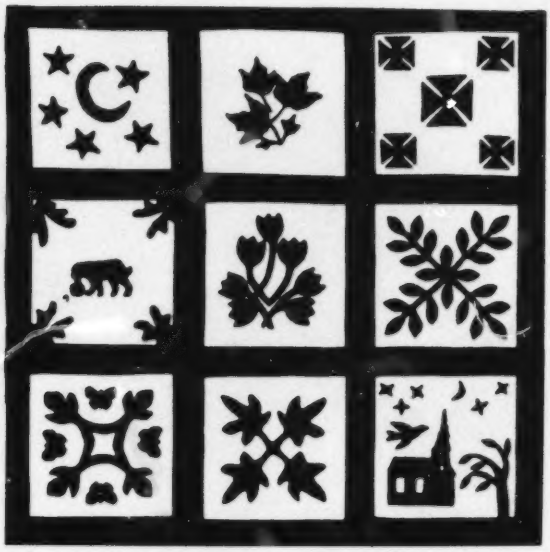
By leaving some things to their imaginations, the film stimulated children to search for explanations which matched the mystical quality of the film. For example, it is not clear how the bear is killed. Fifth and sixth graders in one class suggested that the "kindness broke the spell," and "it might be the courage" of the young man that overcame the bear.

Generally, viewers approached the film very seriously. Even ten-year-olds understood the film and found it relevant. Under-tens seemed to find the film scary; the very things which made the film appealing and challenging to older groups, were problems for many younger viewers. One eight-year-old summarized the impact of the technique this way, "you couldn't see it very good -- you tend to get scared more at something you don't know about." Younger children also spent most of their time discussing the powerful visual images; perhaps they were less interested in discussing the thematic content because they are not yet concerned with the issue of self-identity and inner/outer beauty.

In our field testing, we screened LEGEND with THE FROG KING... These were an interesting pair because they have similar thematic threads and the technique of each, though different, contributes substantially to the film. In comparing the two, a ninth grader summarized, "Both films consider things people deal with, whether they are children or adults."

LEGEND is most appropriate for viewers over ten years old in classroom-sized groups. While an introduction is not needed, it seems to demand follow-up discussion. Fantastic for programs about Native Americans, myths, legends, folklore, transformation, romance, irony, and science fiction, the film makes a wonderful stimulus for maskmaking, poetry writing, storytelling, and arts activities which explore the use of color and light.

M.L.F.



THE WHITE HERON by Jane Morrison 26 minutes
liveaction USA/1978 (Learning Corporation of America)

Adapted from a short story by Sarah Orne Jewett, this film is set in rural Maine in 1896. Filmmaker Morrison, herself a native of Maine, has created a meditative work, scant in dialogue, rich in images -- but faithful to its literary source, which focuses on an adolescent girl's dilemma concerning doing what others want or being true to what she believes in.

The film opens on a summer day. A girl, blonde and barefoot, roams through the woods calling her cow. The lyrical flute and piano score emphasizes the pastoral imagery, as the girl -- Sylvy -- moves through the lush, unpeopled environment. As she wanders almost aimlessly, Sylvy stoops to inspect some mushrooms on the forest floor. A female narrator says that Sylvy enjoys spending time alone in the forest.

The sharp sound of a whistle interrupts her solitude. Before she can run away, a stranger -- a dark, handsome man with a gun, asks how far it is to the road. Explaining that he has been out hunting for birds, the man asks if he can stay for the night at her house. Sylvy does not answer him -- except to tell him her name when he asks that -- and wordlessly walks away, urging the cow home. The man simply follows her.

When they arrive at Sylvy's house, a small place where she and her grandmother live alone, her grandmother is quite cordial to the hunter. During dinner that night, Sylvy listens as her grandmother and the man converse. Her grandmother, a simple, forthright woman, talks mostly about her family. She comments that people characterize Sylvy as "afraid of folks," then adds that "wild critters take Sylvy as one of themselves."

Relaxing on the porch after dinner, the young man whittles and the old woman sews. They talk softly as Sylvy, sitting at the edge of the porch with her feet in the grass, nudges a reluctant frog with her toes. "So, Sylvy knows about birds, does she," the hunter says deliberately loud then goes on to explain that he is seeking a rare white heron to add to his collection. In a flashback, Sylvy recalls seeing such a bird flying above the saltmarsh. The man says he would give ten dollars to anyone who would help him find the heron.

Next day, Sylvy and the hunter travel through the forest together. He talks, almost non-stop, making didactic comments about the forest, birds, and some Indian pipes they discover. During his discourse on the mushrooms, the man uncovers them so he can better show them to Sylvy -- indicating meanwhile that they need shade and moisture to survive. When he walks on Sylvy remains behind to re-cover the Indian pipes with their protective mulch.

Further on, as they walk among some evergreens, the hunter -- without much warning -- shoots a bluejay. When the dead bird falls at her feet, Sylvy is quite visibly shaken. The man explains that he only kills birds in order to study them. Sylvy does not say a word, but she shakes her head and twitches simultaneously as the narrator says that Sylvy wants to understand his ways.

Toward the end of the day, Sylvy and the hunter wait in silence by a marsh, hoping the heron will appear. In a friendly gesture, the man gives Sylvy his penknife. Surprised and pleased, she puts it in the pocket of her smock.

After spending a restless night, Sylvy rises alone before dawn and goes into the forest. She climbs the tallest tree there in hopes of sighting the white heron. It is an arduous task, but Sylvy is persistent. When she reaches the top, she has a breathtaking view of the countryside. Then, as the sun rises, Sylvy sees a magnificent white heron soaring almost in slow-motion against a blue sky.

Sylvy returns home looking disheveled. Wordlessly (and without narrative commentary), she approaches the hunter and her grandmother who are waiting in the yard, curious and worried about where she has been. The hunter questions her about seeing the bird and her grandmother urges her to speak -- "Make it worthwhile tearing yourself up like this." -- but Sylvy remains silent. The man grows impatient. Sylvy looks sad but does not speak. Annoyed and unable to do anything more, the hunter thanks the grandmother and goes on his way.

In the next scene, Sylvy is again looking for her cow. She hears a whistle and reaches in her pocket for the penknife the hunter gave her. She turns it over in her hand pensively, then puts it back. After giving the large beast a tender hug, she leads her cow home.

In the very last scene, music comes up as first one, then two white herons soar gracefully among the reeds in a saltmarsh.

Young viewers responded very positively to THE WHITE HERON during our field testing, despite the fact that all-child groups tended to get a bit restless during certain sections of the film -- particularly when Sylvy and the hunter walk through the forest and wait by the pond. Girls were noticeably more engrossed in the film than boys, who seemed selfconscious -- at times giggling or joking inappropriately. Interestingly, however, both boys and girls were significantly more involved during family screenings -- perhaps because the auditoriums in which family screenings were held, being vaster, darker, and having larger screens than classrooms, presented the film to better effect and capitalized on the film's "environment." Perhaps, as we have observed in relation to other films as well, children are more willing to watch a challenging work when they are accompanied by parents, significant elders, and older siblings.

During a screening, children were typically quiet and intent when the bluejay was shot, excited and admiring when Sylvy climbed the tree, and fascinated with the shots of the heron in flight. Nonetheless, some complained that the film was "boring." As one eleven-year-old explained, "Kids like more action in a movie."

Meditative and slow-paced -- communicating through subtle actions, details, and gestures, the film is indeed more demanding and less entertaining than an action-packed adventure story. We found, however, that the characterization of "boring" meant, at least among ten- to twelve-year-olds, something quite different. In the same way that the word "weird" usually translates as "different" when children apply it to lyrical films (film as art), "boring" seems to translate as "unexpected" -- particularly in reference to the THE WHITE HERON's ending.

First Boy: "It's a boring story; I mean, they have like a good story and you think something's going to happen, but then they just leave it there."

[At this point, the fifth/sixth grade teacher, focusing the group -- perhaps prematurely, asked: "Would it have been more interesting for you if they had pursued that heron and he managed to kill it?" Many children answered, "Yes." The evaluator asked then, "Why would that have been more interesting?"]

Second Boy: "It would be more interesting because... like, if he finally gets it out of her and she finally lets him have what he wants, and they go walking off into the sunset -- that would make it more complete."

First Girl: "I don't think it would make the ending more interesting. I don't think he should have killed it; I think he just should have gotten it."

Evaluator: "How would he get it except by killing it?"

First Girl: "Well... like, she'd show it to him and he'd see how beautiful it is."

Evaluator: "Oh, and then he'd decide not to kill it?"

Second Girl: "I was hoping that something would happen -- like they'd fall in love or something."

Apparently, the ending would have been more satisfying to these fifth/sixth graders if either Sylvy or the hunter had adopted the other's point of view. THE WHITE HERON, in effect, defies their narrative expectations -- particularly as formed by commercial films and children's television specials, etc., which have facile, undeniably clear, upbeat conflict resolutions. Thus, it is understandable how young viewers could say that the film seemed unresolved. THE WHITE HERON is, however, quite well resolved within its own context, because when Sylvy decides against betraying the heron, she resolves her inner conflict and remains true to her love and respect for wild things and nature. It may seem unresolved to children because she is experiencing ambivalence -- an emotion which is rarely considered in materials for children. Thus, Sylvy's decision brings with it both the pleasure of saving the bird and asserting herself positively, and the pain of the loss of friendship with the hunter. Since she tolerates her ambivalence at the end of the film, Sylvy is clearly maturing and beginning to be able to handle a greater complexity of feelings.

The knife is a fitting token of her friendship with the hunter since, like relationships, knives cut both ways; they can both help and harm. Also, knives are instruments for "cutting away" -- something Sylvy does symbolically when she asserts herself.

The union of the two herons at the end of the film -- viewers typically assume they are male and female -- serves as a nonverbal, symbolic epilogue. Functioning similarly to the last scene in THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY, it ends the film on a positive note and suggests that Sylvy herself will someday find another friend.

It is interesting (particularly because many viewers, both children and adults, recall her saying more) that Sylvy only talks twice in the course of the film. The first time is when she calls her cow, and the second time is when she tells the hunter her name. [This is also significant in terms of her "contract" with the hunter. As contrasted with that of the princess in THE FROG KING... who agrees to the frog's terms, ludicrous though they may have been, Sylvy's contract is only tacit.]

Some children commented that Sylvy didn't talk enough, but, despite this, they had no trouble understanding her. In what approaches a genuine insight about Sylvy's motivations, a nine-year-old commented that, "She told a lie; she said she understood why he was killing the bird, but she didn't really understand." An eleven-year-old made this extraordinary observation: "She liked him, but she didn't like what he was doing, so she wasn't sure if she should help him or not. So she did, in a way, and couldn't go through with it."

More than any other action in the film, the tree climbing sequence -- a truly daring action -- evoked children's empathy for Sylvy. The following commentary/dialogue occurred during that scene and the beginning of the one which followed it:

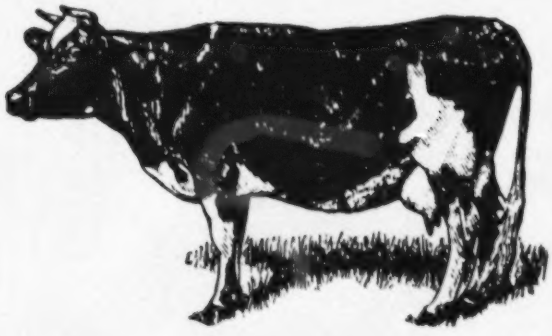
"She can't climb that tree!"
"How's she gonna get up there?"
"She's brave! I'd never do that."
"She's still climbing and it's morning."
"Oh! -- don't fall."
"She's got it!"
"She's dumb."
"No, she's smart."
"She made it!"
"Dag, she's on the highest tree."
"I hope she doesn't fall from there."
"That's a pretty bird."
"Oh, she's coming down."
"She's still getting down the tree. My god!"
"Say something!" [Addressed to Sylvy when she approaches her house.]
"Yes! [say something]"
"She won't tell him. She knows [illegible]s going to shoot the bird."

Although the tree climbing sequence is spectacular, Morrison also uses other, more subtle actions to reveal character. When Sylvy covers the Indian pipes exposed by the hunter, for example, viewers see something of her caring, nurturing personality, as well as the intellectual detachment of the hunter. "Not very many people have seen those," he tells Sylvy while uncovering the fungi. "They don't grow in many places. See how wet the ground is? They need shade, so they have to grow in a forest like this," he concludes, walking away from the fungi. For him, the forest and its creatures are something to study, whereas, for Sylvy, they are almost an extension of herself.

Other film images, such as the dead bluejay, the white heron, and the cow, are used also to reveal character and to serve as symbols. One group of fifth/sixth graders discussed the meaning of the cow -- considering it literally, symbolically, and even structurally (as a device for advancing the storyline).

First Child: "I just want to know why do they have a cow in the movie in the first place?"
Evaluator: "Okay, [everyone] why?"
Second Child: "I don't know -- 'cause those people probably needed milk."
Third Child: "It showed it was like in the country."
Fourth Child: "Well, they needed milk in the first place because they were out in the country and the cow kind of put it together -- how she [Sylvy] liked nature and everything."
Fifth Child: "When the hunter came in and said, 'Can you put me up for the night and also can you spare some milk?' [that was] so you know they didn't have a hotel."
Sixth Child: "They needed the cow in that part because they needed to ask the lady if he could stay the night and get some milk."

This excerpt from a much longer discussion illustrates the richness of discussion possible with THE WHITE HERON. While the film may not succeed with all-child audiences as "pure entertainment," it is tremendously effective for evoking and provoking thoughts and feelings.



THE WHITE HERON is excellent for family programs and for use with over-sixes in all-child groups. It is great for programs about conflict, growing up, animals, American literature, romance, women, and women filmmakers -- and it can be used to stimulate poetry and dramatic improvisations. It can be effectively paired with BAD DOG (reviewed in this issue) to explore point of view and "missed romance," as well as with A CHAIRY TALE (also reviewed herein) to contrast conflict resolutions and genre. Many of the activities suggested in the guide for THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY work with THE WHITE HERON, particularly those having to do with point of view, animal symbols and collections, folklore and imprinting, and dramatic effect.

MCC Staff

Note: THE WHITE HERON is, in the best sense of the word, a values clarification film. Because of its subject (a conflict of values) and the way filmmaker Morrison handled it (treatment and presentation), the film provokes discussion among young viewers. Unlike those formulaic works that have been created for the educational market with the intention of being "values clarification films" (see past reviews of LAURIE in Vol. 4:3-4; THE TAP DANCE KID in Vol. 4:1; and WILLIAM in Vol. 4:2), THE WHITE HERON presents an important, child-appropriate subject to young viewers in a respectful, convincing way and this, more than anything else, is what generates questions and stimulates discussion.

As an actual values clarification film, THE WHITE HERON stands in a special class along with a handful of similar films -- films that we have written about and/or reviewed in past issues or in our books. Included with THE WHITE HERON in this special class of effective values clarification films are the following works:

- From recent articles in Young Viewers, see

I'LL FIND A WAY (in J. Uhry's filmography, Vol. 4:2, p.15)

THE OWL WHO MARRIED A GOOSE (in both D. Boyle's article, Vol. 3:1 and J. Uhry's article, Vol. 4:2)

TALEB AND HIS LAMB (in E. Schecter's article, Vol. 4:3-4)

- From the book, More Films Kids Like, see

CECILY on page 35

THE CHROMIUM HORSE on page 38

THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE on page 60

THE MAGIC PEAR TREE on page 71

THREE STONE BLADES on page 102

- From What to Do When the Lights Go On, see

CECILY on page 126

THE CHROMIUM HORSE on page 128

I'LL FIND A WAY on page 154

LEGEND on page 162 (also reviewed in this issue)

THE OWL WHO MARRIED A GOOSE on page 183

THE STREET on page 208

THREE STONE BLADES on page 212

TALEB AND HIS LAMB on page 210

- From Young Viewers' Film Review Supplement, see

BAD DOG in this issue

A CHAIRY TALE in this issue

THE FROG KING OR FAITHFUL HENRY in this issue

I'LL FIND A WAY in Vol. 1:1

LEGEND in this issue

Corrections for Volume 4, Numbers 3-4 :

On page 2, two titles were omitted from the list of films in the Film Review Supplement. These titles were LAURIE and THE WONDER RING.

On page 15, we mentioned that Media & Methods had ceased publication. It is, happily, still in business. It is, however, under new management at 1511 Walnut Street, Philadelphia PA 19102.

On page 19, the film JEALOUSY is available from Coe Films only for television and cable airing; it is available for rental from Associate Films, 410 Great Road, Littleton MA 01460. For preview and purchase contact Communications Park Video and Film, Box 4000, Mount Kisco NY 10549.

On page 25, omit Center for the Humanities as distributor of LAURIE and add Scholastic Magazine, 904 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs NJ 07632.

On page 32, under Distributors, please add The Museum of Modern Art, 22 West 54th Street, NYC. Delete Center for the Humanities and substitute Scholastic Magazine (address as above).

young viewers

Winter/Spring 1982 (Vol 5, Nos 1 & 2)

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Subscriptions are available for fifteen dollars per volume (four issues a year) from MCC at 3 West 29th Street, New York NY 10001. Subscriptions outside the USA are twenty dollars ($US); overseas airmail is an additional ten dollars ($US). Subscriptions run from January to December and new subscribers will receive the complete volume of the year their subscription begins.

Maureen Gaffney, Editor; Molly Hankwitz, Managing Editor; Merrill Lee Fuchs, Associate Editor.

Illustrations: The illustration on the front cover is by Howard Pyle from The Wonder Clock (Dover, 1965). Although originally designed for "The Step Mother," it depicts a girl, a golden ball, and a well -- three of the motifs in "The Frog King." In addition, it illustrates the Pre-Raphaelite style discussed on page twelve.

The Lobel illustration on page seven was used with permission of the publisher. The still from ARROW TO THE SUN on page twenty-five and the three stills from THE BENT TREE on page 27 were supplied by Texture Films and are used with permission. The three stills from THE FROG PRINCE on pages thirty-four and thirty-five were made available for this issue of Young Viewers through the courtesy of Cecile Starr and reprinted with permission. All other illustrations are in the public domain.

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distributors

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